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MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

The Complete Essays

Translated by M. A. SCREECH

Michel de Montaigne, *Essays of Montaigne, vol. 4* [1580]

Edition used:

Essays of Montaigne, vol. 4, trans. Charles Cotton, revised by William Carew Hazlett (New York: Edwin C. Hill, 1910).

- Author: Michel de Montaigne
- Translator: Charles Cotton
- Editor: William Carew Hazlett

About this title:

Volume 4 of a 10 volume collection of Montaigne's famous essays in the 17th century English translation by Charles Cotton.

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Phyrric Dance. From painting by Jean Leon Gerome.

THE WORKS OF MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

AN ESSAY BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON

ILLVSTRATED

EDWIN C. HILL

NEW YORK.

EMERSON EDITION

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NUMBER _____

Phyrric Dance. From painting by Jean Leon Gerome.

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ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

A CUSTOM OF THE ISLE OF CEA

IF TO philosophize be, as ’tis defined, to doubt, much more to write at random and play the fool, as I do, ought to be reputed doubting, for it is for novices and freshmen to inquire and to dispute, and for the chairman to moderate and determine. My moderator is the authority of the divine will, that governs us without contradiction, and that is seated above these human and vain contestations.

Philip having forcibly entered into Peloponnesus, and some one saying to Damidas that the Lacedaemonians were likely very much to suffer if they did not in time reconcile themselves to his favor: “Why, you pitiful fellow,” replied he, “what can they suffer who do not fear to die?” It being also asked of Agis, which way a man might live free? “Why,” said he, “by despising death.” These, and a thousand other sayings to the same purpose, distinctly sound of something more than the patient attending the stroke of death when it shall come; for there are several accidents in life far worse to suffer than death itself. Witness the Lacedaemonian boy taken by Antigonus, and sold for a slave, who being by his master commanded to some base employment: “Thou shalt see,” says the boy, “whom thou hast bought; it would be a shame for me to serve, being so near the reach of liberty,” and having so said, threw himself from the top of the house. Antipater severely threatening the Lacedaemonians, that he might the better incline them to acquiesce in a certain demand of his: “If thou threatenest us with more than death,” replied they, “we shall the more willingly die;” and to Philip, having written them word that he would frustrate all their enterprises; “what, wilt thou also hinder us from dying?” This is the meaning of the sentence, “That the wise man lives as long as he ought, not so long as he can; and that the most obliging present Nature has made us, and which takes from us all color of complaint of our condition, is to have delivered into our own custody the keys of life; she has only ordered one door into life, but a hundred thousand ways out. We may be straitened for earth to live upon, but earth sufficient to die upon can never be wanting, as Boiocalus answered the Romans.” Why dost thou complain of this world? it detains thee not; thy own cowardice is the cause, if thou livest in pain. There needs no more to die but to will to die:—

"Death is everywhere: heaven has well provided for that. Any one may deprive us of life; no one can deprive us of death. To death there are a thousand avenues."

Neither is it a recipe for one disease only; death is the infallible cure of all; 'tis a most assured port that is never to be feared, and very often to be sought. It comes all to one, whether a man give himself his end, or stays to receive it by some other means; whether he pays before his day, or stay till his day of payment come; from whencesoever it comes, it is still his; in what part soever the thread breaks, there's the end of the clue. The most voluntary death is the finest. Life depends upon the pleasure of others; death upon our own. We ought not to accommodate ourselves to our own humor in anything so much as in this. Reputation is not concerned in such an enterprise; 'tis folly to be concerned by any such apprehension. Living is slavery if the liberty of dying be wanting. The ordinary method of cure is carried on at the expense of life; they torment us with caustics, incisions, and amputations of limbs; they interdict aliment and exhaust our blood; one step farther and we are cured indeed and effectually. Why is not the jugular vein as much at our disposal as the median vein? For a desperate disease a desperate cure. Servius the grammarian, being tormented with the gout, could think of no better remedy than to apply poison to his legs, to deprive them of their sense; let them be gouty at their will, so they were insensible of pain. God gives us leave enough to go when He is pleased to reduce us to such a condition that to live is far worse than to die. 'Tis weakness to truckle under infirmities, but it's madness to nourish them. The Stoics say, that it is living according to nature in a wise man to take his leave of life, even in the height of prosperity, if he do it opportunely; and in a fool to prolong it, though he be miserable, provided he be not indigent of those things which they repute to be according to nature. As I do not offend the law against thieves when I embezzle my own money and cut my own purse; nor that against incendiaries when I burn my own wood; so am I not under the lash of those made against murderers for having deprived myself of my own life. Hegesias said, that as the condition of life did, so the condition of death ought to depend upon our own choice. And Diogenes meeting the philosopher Speusippus, so blown up with an inveterate dropsy that he was fain to be carried in a litter, and by him saluted with the compliment, "I wish you good health." "No health to thee," replied the other, "who art

content to live in such a condition." And in fact, not long after, Speusippus, weary of so languishing a state of life, found a means to die.

But this does not pass without admitting a dispute: for many are of opinion that we cannot quit this garrison of the world without the express command of Him who has placed us in it; and that it appertains to God who has placed us here, not for ourselves only but for His glory and the service of others, to dismiss us when it shall best please Him, and not for us to depart without His license: that we are not born for ourselves only, but for our country also, the laws of which require an account from us upon the score of their own interest, and have an action of manslaughter good against us; and if these fail to take cognizance of the fact, we are punished in the other world as deserters of our duty:—

> *"Thence the sad ones occupy the next abodes, who, though free from guilt, were by their own hands slain, and, hating light, sought death."*

There is more constancy in suffering the chain we are tied to than in breaking it, and more pregnant evidence of fortitude in Regulus than in Cato; 'tis indiscretion and impatience that push us on to these precipices: no accidents can make true virtue turn her back; she seeks and requires evils, pains, and grief, as the things by which she is nourished and supported; the menaces of tyrants, racks, and tortures serve only to animate and rouse her:—

> *"As in Mount Algidus, the sturdy oak even from the axe itself derives new vigor and life."*

And as another says:—

> *"Father, 'tis no virtue to fear life, but to withstand great misfortunes, nor turn back from them."*

Or as this:—

> *"It is easy in adversity to despise death; but he acts more bravely, who can live wretched."*

'Tis cowardice, not virtue, to lie squat in a furrow, under a tomb, to evade the blows of fortune; virtue never stops nor goes out of her path, for the greatest storm that blows:—

> *"Should the world's axis crack, the ruins will but crush a fearless head."*

For the most part, the flying from other inconveniences brings us to this; nay, endeavoring to evade death, we often run into its very mouth:—

“Tell me, is it not madness, that one should die for fear of dying?”

like those who, from fear of a precipice, throw themselves headlong into it:—

“The fear of future ills often makes men run into extreme danger; he is truly brave who boldly dares withstand the mischiefs he apprehends, when they confront him and can be deferred.”

“Death to that degree so frightens some men, that causing them to hate both life and light, they kill themselves, miserably forgetting that this same fear is the fountain of their cares.”

Plato, in his Laws, assigns an ignominious sepulture to him who has deprived his nearest and best friend, namely himself, of life and his destined course, being neither compelled so to do by public judgment, by any sad and inevitable accident of fortune, nor by any insupportable disgrace, but merely pushed on by cowardice and the imbecility of a timorous soul. And the opinion that makes so little of life, is ridiculous; for it is our being, ’tis all we have. Things of a nobler and more elevated being may, indeed, reproach ours; but it is against nature for us to contemn and make little account of ourselves; ’tis a disease particular to man, and not discerned in any other creatures, to hate and despise itself. And it is a vanity of the same stamp to desire to be something else than what we are; the effect of such a desire does not at all touch us, forasmuch as it is contradicted and hindered in itself. He that desires of a man to be made an angel, does nothing for himself; he would be never the better for it; for, being no more, who shall rejoice or be sensible of this benefit for him?—

“For he to whom misery and pain are to be in the future, must himself then exist, when these ills befall him.”

Security, indolence, impassability, the privation of the evils of this life, which we pretend to purchase at the price of dying, are of no manner of advantage to us: that man evades war to very little purpose who can have no fruition of peace; and as little to the purpose does he avoid trouble who cannot enjoy repose.

Amongst those of the first of these two opinions, there has been great debate, what occasions are sufficient to justify the meditation of self-murder, which they call “A reasonable exit.” For though they say that men must often die for trivial causes, seeing those that detain us in life are of no very great weight, yet there is to be some limit. There are fantastic and

senseless humors that have prompted not only individual men, but whole nations to destroy themselves, of which I have elsewhere given some examples; and we further read of the Milesian virgins, that by a frantic compact they hanged themselves one after another till the magistrate took order in it, enacting that the bodies of such as should be found so hanged should be drawn by the same halter stark naked through the city. When Therykion tried to persuade Cleomenes to despatch himself, by reason of the ill posture of his affairs, and, having missed a death of more honor in the battle he had lost, to accept of this the second in honor to it, and not to give the conquerors leisure to make him undergo either an ignominious death or an infamous life: Cleomenes, with a courage truly Stoic and Lacedaemonian, rejected his counsel as unmanly and mean; “that,” said he, “is a remedy that can never be wanting, but which a man is never to make use of, whilst there is an inch of hope remaining:” telling him, “that it was sometimes constancy and valor to live; that he would that even his death should be of use to his country, and would make of it an act of honor and virtue.” Therykion, notwithstanding, thought himself in the right, and did his own business; and Cleomenes afterwards did the same, but not till he had first tried the utmost malevolence of fortune. All the inconveniences in the world are not considerable enough that a man should die to evade them; and, besides, there being so many, so sudden and unexpected changes in human things, it is hard rightly to judge when we are at the end of our hope: —

> *“The gladiator conquered in the lists hopes on, though the menacing spectators, turning their thumb, order him to die.”*

All things, says an old adage, are to be hoped for by a man whilst he lives; ay, but, replies Seneca, why should this rather be always running in a man’s head that fortune can do all things for the living man, than this, that fortune has no power over him that knows how to die? Josephus, when engaged in so near and apparent danger, a whole people being violently bent against him, that there was no visible means of escape, nevertheless, being, as he himself says, in this extremity counselled by one of his friends to despatch himself, it was well for him that he yet maintained himself in hope, for fortune diverted the accident beyond all human expectation, so that he saw himself delivered without any manner of inconvenience. Whereas Brutus and Cassius, on the contrary, threw away the remains of the Roman liberty, of which they were the sole protectors, by the precipitation

and temerity wherewith they killed themselves before the due time and a just occasion. Monsieur d'Anguien, at the battle of Serisolles, twice attempted to run himself through, despairing of the fortune of the day, which went indeed very untowardly on that side of the field where he was engaged, and by that precipitation was very near depriving himself of the enjoyment of so brave a victory. I have seen a hundred hares escape out of the very teeth of the greyhounds:—

"Some one has survived his executioner."

"Length of days, and the various labor of changeful time, have brought things to a better state; fortune turning, shows a reverse face, and again restores men to prosperity."

Pliny says there are but three sorts of diseases, to escape which a man has good title to destroy himself; the worst of which is the stone in the bladder, when the urine is suppressed. Seneca says those only which for a long time are discomposing the functions of the soul. And some there have been who, to avoid a worse death, have chosen one to their own liking. Democritus, general of the Aetolians, being brought prisoner to Rome, found means to make his escape by night: but close pursued by his keepers, rather than suffer himself to be retaken, he fell upon his own sword and died. Antinous and Theodotus, their city of Epirus being reduced by the Romans to the last extremity, gave the people counsel universally to kill themselves; but, these preferring to give themselves up to the enemy, the two chiefs went to seek the death they desired, rushing furiously upon the enemy, with intention to strike home but not to ward a blow. The Island of Gozzo being taken some years ago by the Turks, a Sicilian, who had two beautiful daughters marriageable, killed them both with his own hand, and their mother, running in to save them, to boot, which having done, sallying out of the house with a cross-bow and harquebus, with two shots he killed two of the Turks nearest to his door, and drawing his sword, charged furiously in amongst the rest, where he was suddenly enclosed and cut to pieces, by that means delivering his family and himself from slavery and dishonor. The Jewish women, after having circumcised their children, threw them and themselves down a precipice to avoid the cruelty of Antigonus. I have been told of a person of condition in one of our prisons, that his friends, being informed that he would certainly be condemned, to avoid the ignominy of such a death suborned a priest to tell him that the only means of his deliverance was to recommend himself to such a saint, under such

and such vows, and to fast eight days together without taking any manner of nourishment, what weakness or faintness soever he might find in himself during the time; he followed their advice, and by that means destroyed himself before he was aware, not dreaming of death or any danger in the experiment. Scribonia advising her nephew Libo to kill himself rather than await the stroke of justice, told him that it was to do other people's business to preserve his life to put it after into the hands of those who within three or four days would fetch him to execution, and that it was to serve his enemies to keep his blood to gratify their malice.

We read in the Bible that Nicanor, the persecutor of the law of God, having sent his soldiers to seize upon the good old man Razis, surnamed in honor of his virtue the father of the Jews: the good man, seeing no other remedy, his gates burned down, and the enemies ready to seize him, choosing rather to die nobly than to fall into the hands of his wicked adversaries and suffer himself to be cruelly butchered by them, contrary to the honor of his rank and quality, stabbed himself with his own sword, but the blow, for haste, not having been given home, he ran and threw himself from the top of a wall headlong among them, who separating themselves and making room, he pitched directly upon his head; notwithstanding which, feeling yet in himself some remains of life, he renewed his courage, and starting up upon his feet all bloody and wounded as he was, and making his way through the crowd to a precipitous rock, there, through one of his wounds, drew out his bowels, which, tearing and pulling to pieces with both his hands, he threw amongst his pursuers, all the while attesting and invoking the Divine vengeance upon them for their cruelty and injustice.

Of violences offered to the conscience, that against the chastity of woman is, in my opinion, most to be avoided, forasmuch as there is a certain pleasure naturally mixed with it, and for that reason the dissent therein cannot be sufficiently perfect and entire, so that the violence seems to be mixed with a little consent of the forced party. The ecclesiastical history has several examples of devout persons who have embraced death to secure them from the outrages prepared by tyrants against their religion and honor. Pelagia and Sophronia, both canonized, the first of these precipitated herself with her mother and sisters into the river to avoid being forced by some soldiers, and the last also killed herself to avoid being ravished by the Emperor Maxentius.

It may, peradventure, be an honor to us in future ages, that a learned author of this present time, and a Parisian, takes a great deal of pains to persuade the ladies of our age rather to take any other course than to enter into the horrid meditation of such a despair. I am sorry he had never heard, that he might have inserted it amongst his other stories, the saying of a woman, which was told me at Toulouse, who had passed through the handling of some soldiers: “God be praised,” said she, “that once at least in my life I have had my fill without sin.” In truth, these cruelties are very unworthy the French good nature, and also, God be thanked, our air is very well purged of them since this good advice: ’tis enough that they say “no” in doing it, according to the rule of the good Marot.

History is everywhere full of those who by a thousand ways have exchanged a painful and irksome life for death. Lucius Aruntius killed himself, to fly, he said, both the future and the past. Gramus Silvanus and Statius Proximus, after having been pardoned by Nero, killed themselves; either disdaining to live by the favor of so wicked a man, or that they might not be troubled, at some other time, to obtain a second pardon, considering the proclivity of his nature to suspect and credit accusations against worthy men. Spargapises, son of Queen Tomyris, being a prisoner of war to Cyrus, made use of the first favor Cyrus showed him, in commanding him to be unbound, to kill himself, having pretended to no other benefit of liberty, but only to be revenged of himself for the disgrace of being taken. Boges, governor in Eion for King Xerxes, being besieged by the Athenian army under the conduct of Cimon, refused the conditions offered, that he might return safe into Asia with all his wealth, impatient to survive the loss of a place his master had given him to keep; wherefore, having defended the city to the last extremity, nothing being left to eat, he first threw all the gold and whatever else the enemy could make booty of into the river Strymon, and then causing a great pile to be set on fire, and the throats of all the women, children, concubines, and servants to be cut, he threw their bodies into the fire, and at last leaped into it himself.

Ninachetuen, an Indian lord, so soon as he heard the first whisper of the Portuguese Viceroy’s determination to dispossess him, without any apparent cause, of his command in Malacca, to transfer it to the King of Campar, he took this resolution with himself: he caused a scaffold, more long than broad, to be erected, supported by columns royally adorned with tapestry and strewed with flowers and abundance of perfumes; all which

being prepared, in a robe of cloth of gold, set full of jewels of great value, he came out into the street, and mounted the steps to the scaffold, at one corner of which he had a pile lighted of aromatic wood. Everybody ran to see to what end these unusual preparations were made; when Ninachetuen, with a manly but displeased countenance, set forth how much he had obliged the Portuguese nation, and with how unspotted fidelity he had carried himself in his charge; that having so often, sword in hand, manifested in the behalf of others, that honor was much more dear to him than life, he was not to abandon the concern of it for himself: that fortune denying him all means of opposing the affront designed to be put upon him, his courage at least enoined him to free himself from the sense of it, and not to serve for a fable to the people, nor for a triumph to men less deserving than himself; which having said he leaped into the fire.

Sextilia, wife of Scaurus, and Paxaea, wife of Labeo, to encourage their husbands to avoid the dangers that pressed upon them, wherein they had no other share than conjugal affection, voluntarily sacrificed their own lives to serve them in this extreme necessity for company and example. What they did for their husbands, Cocceius Nerva did for his country, with less utility though with equal affection: this great lawyer, flourishing in health, riches, reputation, and favor with the Emperor, had no other cause to kill himself but the sole compassion of the miserable state of the Roman Republic. Nothing can be added to the beauty of the death of the wife of Fulvious, a familiar favorite of Augustus: Augustus having discovered that he had vented an important secret he had intrusted him withal, one morning that he came to make his court, received him very coldly and looked frowingly upon him. He returned home, full of despair, where he sorrowfully told his wife that, having fallen into this misfortune, he was resolved to kill himself: to which she roundly replied, “ ’tis but reason you should, seeing that having so often experienced the incontinence of my tongue, you could not take warning: but let me kill myself first,” and without any more saying ran herself through the body with a sword. Vibius Virrius, despairing of the safety of his city besieged by the Romans and of their mercy, in the last deliberation of his city’s senate, after many arguments conducing to that end, concluded that the most noble means to escape fortune was by their own hands: telling them that the enemy would have them in honor, and Hannibal would be sensible how many faithful friends he had abandoned; inviting those who approved of his advice to

come to a good supper he had ready at home, where after they had eaten well, they would drink together of what he had prepared; a beverage, said he, that will deliver our bodies from torments, our souls from insult, and our eyes and ears from the sense of so many hateful mischiefs, as the conquered suffer from cruel and implacable conquerors. I have, said he, taken order for fit persons to throw our bodies into a funeral pile before my door so soon as we are dead. Many enough approved this high resolution, but few imitated it; seven-and-twenty senators followed him, who, after having tried to drown the thought of this fatal determination in wine, ended the feast with the mortal mess; and embracing one another, after they had jointly deplored the misfortune of their country, some retired home to their own houses, others stayed to be burned with Vibius in his funeral pyre; and were all of them so long in dying, the vapor of the wine having prepossessed the veins, and by that means deferred the effect of the poison, that some of them were within an hour of seeing the enemy inside the walls of Capua, which was taken the next morning, and of undergoing the miseries they had at so dear a rate endeavored to avoid. Jubellius Taurea, another citizen of the same country, the Consul Fulvius returning from the shameful butchery he had made of two hundred and twenty-five senators, called him back fiercely by name, and having made him stop: “Give the word,” said he, “that somebody may dispatch me after the massacre of so many others, that thou mayest boast to have killed a much more valiant man than thyself.” Fulvius, disdaining him as a man out of his wits, and also having received letters from Rome censuring the inhumanity of his execution which tied his hands, Jubellius proceeded: “Since my country has been taken, my friends dead, and having with my own hands slain my wife and children to rescue them from the desolation of this ruin, I am denied to die the death of my fellow-citizens, let me borrow from virtue vengeance on this hated life,” and therewithal drawing a short sword he carried concealed about him, he ran it through his own bosom, falling down backward, and expiring at the consul’s feet.

Alexander, laying siege to a city of the Indies, those within, finding themselves very hardly set, put on a vigorous resolution to deprive him of the pleasure of his victory, and accordingly burned themselves in general, together with their city, in despite of his humanity: a new kind of war, where the enemies sought to save them, and they to destroy themselves, doing to make themselves sure of death, all that men do to secure life.

Astapa, a city of Spain, finding itself weak in walls and defence to withstand the Romans, the inhabitants made a heap of all their riches and furniture in the public place; and, having ranged upon this heap all the women and children, and piled them round with wood and other combustible matter to take sudden fire, and left fifty of their young men for the execution of that whereon they had resolved, they made a desperate sally, where for want of power to overcome, they caused themselves to be every man slain. The fifty, after having massacred every living soul throughout the whole city, and put fire to this pile, threw themselves lastly into it, finishing their generous liberty, rather after an insensible, than after a sorrowful and disgraceful manner, giving the enemy to understand, that if fortune had been so pleased, they had as well the courage to snatch from them victory as they had to frustrate and render it dreadful, and even mortal to those who, allured by the splendor of the gold melting in this flame, having approached it, a great number were there suffocated and burned, being kept from retiring by the crowd that followed after.

The Abydeans, being pressed by King Philip, put on the same resolution; but, not having time, they could not put it in effect. The king, who was struck with horror at the rash precipitation of this execution (the treasure and movables that they had condemned to the flames being first seized), drawing off his soldiers, granted them three days' time to kill themselves in, that they might do it with more order and at greater ease: which time they filled with blood and slaughter beyond the utmost excess of all hostile cruelty, so that not so much as any one soul was left alive that had power to destroy itself. There are infinite examples of like popular resolutions which seem the more fierce and cruel in proportion as the effect is more universal, and yet are really less so than when singly executed; what arguments and persuasion cannot do with individual men, they can do with all, the ardor of society ravishing particular judgments.

The condemned who would live to be executed in the reign of Tiberius, forfeited their goods and were denied the rites of sepulture; those who, by killing themselves, anticipated it, were interred, and had liberty to dispose of their estate by will.

But men sometimes covet death out of hope of a greater good. "I desire," says St. Paul, "to be with Christ," and "who shall rid me of these bands?" Cleombrotus of Ambracia, having read Plato's Phaedo, entered into so great a desire of the life to come that, without any other occasion, he

threw himself into the sea. By which it appears how improperly we call this voluntary dissolution, despair, to which the eagerness of hope often inclines us, and, often, a calm and temperate desire proceeding from a mature and deliberate judgment. Jacques du Chastel, bishop of Soissons, in St. Louis's foreign expedition, seeing the king and whole army upon the point of returning into France, leaving the affairs of religion imperfect, took a resolution rather to go into Paradise; wherefore, having taken solemn leave of his friends, he charged alone, in the sight of every one, into the enemy's army, where he was presently cut to pieces. In a certain kingdom of the new-discovered world, upon a day of solemn procession, when the idol they adore is drawn about in public upon a chariot of marvellous greatness; besides that many are then seen cutting off pieces of their flesh to offer to him, there are a number of others who prostrate themselves upon the place, causing themselves to be crushed and broken to pieces under the weighty wheels, to obtain the veneration of sanctity after death, which is accordingly paid them. The death of the bishop, sword in hand, has more of magnanimity in it, and less of sentiment, the ardor of combat taking away part of the latter.

There are some governments who have taken upon them to regulate the justice and opportunity of voluntary death. In former times there was kept in our city of Marseilles a poison prepared out of hemlock, at the public charge, for those who had a mind to hasten their end, having first, before the six hundred, who were their senate, given account of the reasons and motives of their design, and it was not otherwise lawful, than by leave from the magistrate and upon just occasion to do violence to themselves. The same law was also in use in other places.

Sextus Pompeius, in his expedition into Asia, touched at the isle of Cea in Negropont: it happened whilst he was there, as we have it from one that was with him, that a woman of great quality, having given an account to her citizens why she was resolved to put an end to her life, invited Pompeius to her death, to render it the more honorable, an invitation that he accepted; and having long tried in vain by the power of his eloquence, which was very great, and persuasion, to divert her from that design, he acquiesced in the end in her own will. She had passed the age of four score and ten in a very happy state, both of body and mind; being then laid upon her bed, better dressed than ordinary and leaning upon her elbow, "The gods," said she, "O Sextus Pompeius, and rather those I leave than those I go to seek,

reward thee, for that thou hast not disdained to be both the counsellor of my life and the witness of my death. For my part, having always experienced the smiles of fortune, for fear lest the desire of living too long may make me see a contrary face, I am going, by a happy end, to dismiss the remains of my soul, leaving behind two daughters of my body and a legion of nephews;" which having said, with some exhortations to her family to live in peace, she divided amongst them her goods, and recommending her domestic gods to her eldest daughter, she boldly took the bowl that contained the poison, and having made her vows and prayers to Mercury to conduct her to some happy abode in the other world, she roundly swallowed the mortal poison. This being done, she entertained the company with the progress of its operation, and how the cold by degrees seized the several parts of her body one after another, till having in the end told them it began to seize upon her heart and bowels, she called her daughters to do the last office and close her eyes.

Pliny tells us of a certain Hyperborean nation where, by reason of the sweet temperature of the air, lives rarely ended but by the voluntary surrender of the inhabitants, who, being weary of and satiated with living, had the custom, at a very old age, after having made good cheer, to precipitate themselves into the sea from the top of a certain rock, assigned for that service. Pain and the fear of a worse death seem to me the most excusable incitements.

BUSINESS TO-MORROW

I GIVE, as it seems to me, with good reason the palm to Jacques Amyot of all our French writers, not only for the simplicity and purity of his language, wherein he excels all others, nor for his constancy in going through so long a work, nor for the depth of his knowledge, having been able so successfully to smooth and unravel so knotty and intricate an author (for let people tell me what they will, I understand nothing of Greek, but I meet with sense so well united and maintained throughout his whole translation, that certainly he either knew the true fancy of the author, or, having, by being long conversant with him, imprinted a vivid and general idea of that of Plutarch in his soul, he has delivered us nothing that either derogates from or contradicts him), but above all, I am the most taken with him for having made so discreet a choice of a book so worthy and of so great utility wherewith to present his country. We ignorant fellows had been lost, had not this book raised us out of the dirt; by this favor of his we dare now speak and write; the ladies are able to read to schoolmasters; ’tis our breviary. If this good man be yet living, I would recommend to him Xenophon, to do as much by that; ’tis a much more easy task than the other, and consequently more proper for his age. And, besides, though I know not how, methinks he does briskly and clearly enough trip over steps another would have stumbled at, yet nevertheless his style seems to be more his own where he does not encounter those difficulties, and rolls away at his own ease.

I was just now reading this passage where Plutarch says of himself, that Rusticus being present at a declamation of his at Rome, there received a packet from the emperor, and deferred to open it till all was done: for which, says he, all the company highly applauded the gravity of this person. ’Tis true, that being upon the subject of curiosity and of that eager passion for news, which makes us with so much indiscretion and impatience leave all to entertain a newcomer, and without any manner of respect or outcry, tear open on a sudden, in what company soever, the letters that are delivered to us, he had reason to applaud the gravity of Rusticus upon this occasion; and might moreover have added to it the commendation of his civility and courtesy, that would not interrupt the current of his declamation. But I doubt whether any one can commend his prudence; for receiving

unexpected letters, and especially from an emperor, it might have fallen out that the deferring to read them might have been of great prejudice. The vice opposite to curiosity is negligence, to which I naturally incline, and wherein I have seen some men so extreme that one might have found letters sent them three or four days before, still sealed up in their pockets.

I never open any letters directed to another, not only those intrusted with me, but even such as fortune has guided to my hand; and am angry with myself if my eyes unawares steal any contents of letters of importance he is reading when I stand near a great man. Never was man less inquisitive or less prying into other men's affairs than I.

In our fathers' days, Monsieur de Boutieres had like to have lost Turin from having, while engaged in good company at supper, delayed to read information that was sent him of the treason plotted against that city where he commanded. And this very Plutarch has given me to understand, that Julius Caesar had preserved himself, if, going to the Senate the day he was assassinated by the conspirators, he had read a note which was presented to him by the way. He tells also the story of Archias, the tyrant of Thebes, that the night before the execution of the design Pelopidas had plotted to kill him to restore his country to liberty, he had a full account sent him in writing by another Archias, an Athenian, of the whole conspiracy, and that, this packet having been delivered to him while he sat at supper, he deferred the opening of it, saying, which afterwards turned to a proverb in Greece, "Business to-morrow."

A wise man may, I think, out of respect to another, as not to disturb the company, as Rusticus did, or not to break off another affair of importance in hand, defer to read or hear any new thing that is brought him; but for his own interest or particular pleasure, especially if he be a public minister, that he will not interrupt his dinner or break his sleep is inexcusable. And there was anciently at Rome, the consular place, as they called it, which was the most honorable at the table, as being a place of most liberty, and of more convenient access to those who came in to speak to the person seated there; by which it appears, that being at meat, they did not totally abandon the concern of other affairs and incidents. But when all is said, it is very hard in human actions to give so exact a rule upon moral reasons, that fortune will not therein maintain her own right.

OF CONSCIENCE

THE SIEUR DE LA BROUSSE, my brother, and I, travelling one day together during the time of our civil wars, met a gentleman of good sort. He was of the contrary party, though I did not know so much, for he pretended otherwise: and the mischief on't is, that in this sort of war the cards are so shuffled, your enemy not being distinguished from yourself by any apparent mark either of language or habit, and being nourished under the same law, air, and manners, it is very hard to avoid disorder and confusion. This made me afraid myself of meeting any of our troops in a place where I was not known, that I might not be in fear to tell my name, and peradventure of something worse; as it had befallen me before, where, by such a mistake, I lost both men and horses, and amongst others an Italian gentleman, my page, whom I bred with the greatest care and affection, was miserably slain, in whom a youth of great promise and expectation was extinguished. But the gentleman my brother and I met had so desperate, half-dead a fear upon him at meeting with any horse, or passing by any of the towns that held for the King, that I at last discovered it to be alarms of conscience. It seemed to the poor man as if through his visor and the crosses upon his cassock, one would have penetrated into his bosom and read the most secret intentions of his heart; so wonderful is the power of conscience. It makes us betray, accuse, and fight against ourselves, and for want of other witnesses, to give evidence against ourselves:—

"*The torturer of the soul brandishing a sharp scourge within.*"

This story is in every child's mouth: Bessus the Paeonian, being reproached for wantonly pulling down a nest of young sparrows and killing them, replied, that he had reason to do so, seeing that those little birds never ceased falsely to accuse him of the murder of his father. This parricide had till then been concealed and unknown, but the revenging fury of conscience caused it to be discovered by him himself, who was to suffer for it. Hesiod corrects the saying of Plato, that punishment closely follows sin, it being, as he says, born at the same time with it. Whoever expects punishment already suffers it, and whoever has deserved it expects it. Wickedness contrives torments against itself:—

"*Ill designs are worst to the contriver,*"

as the wasp stings and hurts another, but most of all itself, for it there loses its sting and its use for ever:—

"And lay down their lives in the wound."

Cantharides have somewhere about them, by a contrariety of nature, a counterpoison against their poison. In like manner, at the same time that men take delight in vice, there springs in the conscience a displeasure that afflicts us sleeping and waking with various tormenting imaginations:—

"Surely where many, often talking in their sleep, or raving in disease, are said to have betrayed themselves, and to have given publicity to offences long concealed."

Apollodorus dreamed that he saw himself flayed by the Scythians and afterwards boiled in a cauldron, and that his heart muttered these words: "I am the cause of all these mischiefs that have befallen thee." Epicurus said that no hiding-hole could conceal the wicked, since they could never assure themselves of being hid whilst their conscience discovered them to themselves:—

"This is the highest revenge, that by its judgment no offender is absolved."

As an ill conscience fills us with fear, so a good one gives us greater confidence and assurance; and I can truly say that I have gone through several hazards with a more steady pace in consideration of the secret knowledge I had of my own will and the innocence of my intentions:—

"As a man's conscience is, so within hope or fear prevails, suiting to his design."

Of this are a thousand examples; but it will be enough to instance three of one and the same person. Scipio, being one day accused before the people of Rome of some crimes of a very high nature, instead of excusing himself or flattering his judges: "It will become you well," said he, "to sit in judgment upon a head, by whose means you have the power to judge all the world." Another time, all the answer he gave to several impeachments brought against him by a tribune of the people, instead of making his defence: "Let us go, citizens," said he, "let us go render thanks to the gods for the victory they gave me over the Carthaginians as this day," and advancing himself before towards the Temple, he had presently all the assembly and his very accuser himself following at his heels. And Petilius, having been set on by Cato to demand an account of the money that had passed through his hands in the province of Antioch, Scipio being come into

the senate to that purpose, produced a book from under his robe, wherein he told them was an exact account of his receipts and disbursements; but being required to deliver it to the prothonotary to be examined, he refused, saying, he would not do himself so great a disgrace; and in the presence of the whole senate tore the book with his own hands to pieces. I do not believe that the most seared conscience could have counterfeited so great an assurance. He had naturally too high a spirit and was accustomed to too high a fortune, says Titius Livius, to know how to be criminal, and to lower himself to the meanness of defending his innocence. The putting men to the rack is a dangerous invention, and seems to be rather a trial of patience than of truth. Both he who has the fortitude to endure it conceals the truth, and he who has not: for why should pain sooner make me confess what really is, than force me to say what is not! And, on the contrary, if he who is not guilty of that whereof he is accused, has the courage to undergo those torments, why should not he who is guilty have the same, so fair a reward as life being in his prospect? I believe the ground of this invention proceeds from the consideration of the force of conscience: for, to the guilty, it seems to assist the rack to make him confess his fault and to shake his resolution; and, on the other side, that it fortifies the innocent against the torture. But when all is done, ’tis, in plain truth, a trial full of uncertainty and danger: what would not a man say, what would not a man do, to avoid so intolerable torments?—

“Pain will make even the innocent lie.”

Whence it comes to pass, that him whom the judge has racked that he may not die innocent, he makes him die both innocent and racked. A thousand and a thousand have charged their own heads by false confessions, amongst whom I place Philotas, considering the circumstances of the trial Alexander put upon him and the progress of his torture. But so it is that some say it is the least evil human weakness could invent; very inhumanly, notwithstanding, and to very little purpose, in my opinion.

Many nations less barbarous in this than the Greeks and Romans who call them so, repute it horrible and cruel to torment and pull a man to pieces for a fault of which they are yet in doubt. How can he help your ignorance? Are not you unjust, that, not to kill him without cause, do worse than kill him? And that this is so, do but observe how often men prefer to die without reason than undergo this examination, more painful than execution itself; and that oft-times by its extremity anticipates execution, and perform it. I

know not where I had this story; but it exactly matches the conscience of our justice in this particular. A country-woman, to a general of a very severe discipline, accused one of his soldiers that he had taken from her children the little soup meat she had left to nourish them withal, the army having consumed all the rest; but of this proof there was none. The general, after having cautioned the woman to take good heed to what she said, for that she would make herself guilty of a false accusation if she told a lie, and she persisting, he presently caused the soldier’s belly to be ripped up to clear the truth of the fact, and the woman was found to be right. An instructive sentence.

OF EXERCITATION

’TIS NOT to be expected that argument and instruction, though we never so voluntarily surrender our belief to what is read to us, should be of force to lead us on so far as to action, if we do not, over and above, exercise and form the soul by experience to the course for which we design it; it will, otherwise, doubtless find itself at a loss when it comes to the pinch of the business. This is the reason why those amongst the philosophers who were ambitious to attain to a greater excellence, were not contented to await the severities of fortune in the retirement and repose of their own habitations, lest he should have surprised them raw and inexpert in the combat, but sallied out to meet her, and purposely threw themselves into the proof of difficulties. Some of them abandoned riches to exercise themselves in a voluntary poverty; others sought out labor and an austerity of life, to inure them to hardships and inconveniences; others have deprived themselves of their dearest members, as of sight, and of the instruments of generation, lest their too delightful and effeminate service should soften and debauch the stability of their souls.

But in dying, which is the greatest work we have to do, practice can give us no assistance at all. A man may by custom fortify himself against pain, shame, necessity, and such-like accidents, but as to death, we can experiment it but once, and are all apprentices when we come to it. There have, anciently, been men so excellent managers of their time that they have tried even in death itself to relish and taste it, and who have bent their utmost faculties of mind to discover what this passage is, but they are none of them come back to tell us the news:—

“No one wakes who has once fallen into the cold sleep of death.”

Julius Canus, a noble Roman, of singular constancy and virtue, having been condemned to die by that worthless fellow Caligula, besides many marvellous testimonies that he gave of his resolution, as he was just going to receive the stroke of the executioner, was asked by a philosopher, a friend of his: “Well, Canus, whereabout is your soul now? what is she doing? What are you thinking of?” “I was thinking,” replied the other, “to keep myself ready, and the faculties of my mind full settled and fixed, to try if in this short and quick instant of death, I could perceive the motion of the soul when she parts from the body, and whether she has any sentiment at

the separation, that I may after come again if I can, to acquaint my friends with it." This man philosophizes not unto death only, but in death itself. What a strange assurance was this, and what bravery of courage, to desire his death should be a lesson to him, and to have leisure to think of other things in so great an affair:—

"This privilege of the dying he had."

And yet I fancy, there is a certain way of making it familiar to us, and in some sort of making trial what it is. We may gain experience, if not entire and perfect, yet such, at least, as shall not be totally useless to us, and that may render us more confident and more assured. If we cannot overtake it, we may approach it and view it, and if we do not advance so far as the fort, we may at least discover and make ourselves acquainted with the avenues. It is not without reason that we are taught to consider sleep as a resemblance of death: with how great facility do we pass from waking to sleeping, and with how little concern do we lose the knowledge of light and of ourselves. Peradventure, the faculty of sleeping would seem useless and contrary to nature, since it deprives us of all action and sentiment, were it not that by it nature instructs us that she has equally made us to die as to live; and in life presents to us the eternal state she reserves for us after it, to accustom us to it and to take from us the fear of it. But such as have by some violent accident fallen into a swoon, and in it have lost all sense, these, methinks, have been very near seeing the true and natural face of death; for as to the moment of the passage, it is not to be feared that it brings with it any pain or displeasure, forasmuch as we can have no feeling without leisure; our sufferings require time, which in death is so short, and so precipitous, that it must necessarily be insensible. They are the approaches that we are to fear, and these may fall within the limits of experience.

Many things seem greater by imagination than they are in effect; I have passed a good part of my life in a perfect and entire health; I say, not only entire, but, moreover, sprightly and wanton. This state, so full of verdure, jollity, and vigor, made the consideration of sickness so formidable to me, that when I came to experience it, I found the attacks faint and easy in comparison with what I had apprehended. Of this I have daily experience; if I am under the shelter of a warm room, in a stormy and tempestuous night, I wonder how people can live abroad, and am afflicted for those who are out in the fields: if I am there myself, I do not wish to be

anywhere else. This one thing of being always shut up in a chamber I fancied insupportable: but I was presently inured to be so imprisoned a week, nay a month together, in a very weak, disordered, and sad condition; and I have found that, in the time of my health, I much more pitied the sick, than I think myself to be pitied when I am so, and that the force of my imagination enhances near one-half of the essence and reality of the thing. I hope that when I come to die I shall find it the same, and that, after all, it is not worth the pains I take, so much preparation and so much assistance as I call in, to undergo the stroke. But, at all events, we cannot give ourselves too much advantage.

In the time of our third or second troubles (I do not well remember which), going one day abroad to take the air, about a league from my own house, which is seated in the very centre of all the bustle and mischief of the late civil wars in France; thinking myself in all security and so near to my retreat that I stood in need of no better equipage, I had taken a horse that went very easy upon his pace, but was not very strong. Being upon my return home, a sudden occasion falling out to make use of this horse in a kind of service that he was not accustomed to, one of my train, a lusty, tall fellow, mounted upon a strong German horse, that had a very ill mouth, fresh and vigorous, to play the brave and set on ahead of his fellows, comes thundering full speed in the very track where I was, rushing like a Colossus upon the little man and the little horse, with such a career of strength and weight, that he turned us both over and over, topsy-turvy with our heels in the air: so that there lay the horse overthrown and stunned with the fall, and I ten or twelve paces from him stretched out at length, with my face all battered and broken, my sword which I had had in my hand, above ten paces beyond that, and my belt broken all to pieces, without motion or sense any more than a stock. ’Twas the only swoon I was ever in till that hour in my life. Those who were with me, after having used all the means they could to bring me to myself, concluding me dead, took me up in their arms, and carried me with very much difficulty home to my house, which was about half a French league from thence. On the way, having been for more than two hours given over for a dead man, I began to move and to fetch my breath; for so great abundance of blood was fallen into my stomach, that nature had need to rouse her forces to discharge it. They then raised me upon my feet, where I threw off a whole bucket of clots of blood, as this I did also several times by the way. This gave me so much ease, that

I began to recover a little life, but so leisurely and by so small advances, that my first sentiments were much nearer the approaches of death than life:—

"For the soul, doubtful as to its return, could not compose itself."

The remembrance of this accident, which is very well imprinted in my memory, so naturally representing to me the image and idea of death, has in some sort reconciled me to that untoward adventure. When I first began to open my eyes, it was with so perplexed, so weak and dead a sight, that I could yet distinguish nothing but only discern the light:—

"As a man that now opens, now shuts his eyes, between sleep and waking."

As to the functions of the soul, they advanced with the same pace and measure with those of the body. I saw myself all bloody, my doublet being stained all over with the blood I had vomited. The first thought that came into my mind was, that I had a harquebuss shot in my head, and, indeed, at the time there were a great many fired round about us. Methought my life but just hung upon my lips: and I shut my eyes, to help, methought, to thrust it out, and took a pleasure in languishing and letting myself go. It was an imagination that only superficially floated upon my soul, as tender and weak as all the rest, but really, not only exempt from anything displeasing, but mixed with that sweetness that people feel when they glide into a slumber.

I believe it is the very same condition those people are in, whom we see swoon with weakness in the agony of death, and I am of opinion that we pity them without cause, supposing them agitated with grievous dolors, or that their souls suffer under painful thoughts. It has ever been my belief, contrary to the opinion of many, and particularly of La Boetie, that those whom we see so subdued and stupefied at the approaches of their end, or oppressed with the length of the disease, or by accident of an apoplexy or falling sickness:—

"Often, compelled by the force of disease, some one as thunderstruck falls under our eyes, and foams, groans, and trembles, stretches, twists, breathes irregularly, and in paroxysms wears out his strength;"

or hurt in the head, whom we hear to mutter, and by fits to utter grievous groans; though we gather from these signs by which it seems as if they had some remains of consciousness, and that there are movements of

the body; I have always believed, I say, both the body and the soul benumbed and asleep,

"He lives, and does not know that he is alive,"

and could not believe that in so great a stupefaction of the members and so great a defection of the senses, the soul could maintain any force within to take cognizance of herself, and that, therefore, they had no tormenting reflections to make them consider and be sensible of the misery of their condidition, and consequently were not much to be pitied.

I can, for my part, think of no state so insupportable and dreadful, as to have the soul vivid and afflicted, without means to declare itself; as one should say of such as are sent to execution with their tongues first cut out (were it not that in this kind of dying, the most silent seems to me the most graceful, if accompanied with a grave and constant countenance); or if those miserable prisoners, who fall into the hands of the base hangman soldiers of this age, by whom they are tormented with all sorts of inhuman usage to compel them to some excessive and impossible ransom; kept, in the meantime, in such condition and place, where they have no means of expressing or signifying their thoughts and their misery. The poets have feigned some gods who favor the deliverance of such as suffer under a languishing death:—

"I bidden offer this sacred thing to Pluto, and from that body dismiss thee;"

both the interrupted words, and the short and irregular answers one gets from them sometimes, by bawling and keeping a clutter about them; or the motions which seem to yield some consent to what we would have them do, are no testimony, nevertheless, that they live, an entire life at least. So it happens to us in the yawning of sleep, before it has fully possessed us, to perceive, as in a dream, what is done about us, and to follow the last things that are said with a perplexed and uncertain hearing which seems but to touch upon the borders of the soul; and to make answers to the last words that have been spoken to us, which have more in them of chance than sense.

Now seeing I have in effect tried it, I have no doubt but I have hitherto made a right judgment; for first, being in a swoon, I labored to rip open the buttons of my doublet with my nails, for my sword was gone; and yet I felt nothing in my imagination that hurt me; for we have many motions in us that do not proceed from our direction:—

"Half-dead fingers grope about, and grasp again the sword;"

so falling people extend their arms before them by a natural impulse, which prompts our limbs to offices and motions without any commission from our reason:

> *"They relate that scythe-bearing chariots mow off limbs, so that they quiver on the ground; and yet the mind of him from whom the limb is taken by the swiftness of the blow feels no pain."*

My stomach was so oppressed with the coagulated blood, that my hands moved to that part, of their own voluntary motion, as they frequently do to the part that itches, without being directed by our will. There are several animals, and even men, in whom one may perceive the muscles to stir and tremble after they are dead. Every one experimentally knows that there are some members which grow stiff and flag without his leave. Now, those passions which only touch the outward bark of us, cannot be said to be ours: to make them so, there must be a concurrence of the whole man; and the pains which are felt by the hand or the foot while we are sleeping, are none of ours.

As I drew near my own house, where the alarm of my fall was already got before me, and my family were come out to meet me, with the hubbub usual in such cases, not only did I make some little answer to some questions which were asked me; but they moreover tell me, that I was sufficiently collected to order them to bring a horse to my wife, whom I saw struggling and tiring herself on the road, which is hilly and rugged. This consideration should seem to proceed from a soul that retained its functions; but it was nothing so with me. I knew not what I said or did, and they were nothing but idle thoughts in the clouds, that were stirred up by the senses of the eyes and ears, and proceeded not from me. I knew not for all that, whence I came or whither I went, neither was I capable to weigh and consider what was said to me: these were light effects, that the senses produced of themselves as of custom; what the soul contributed was in a dream, lightly touched, licked and bedewed by the soft impression of the senses. Notwithstanding, my condition was, in truth, very easy and quiet; I had no affliction upon me, either for others or myself; it was an extreme languor and weakness, without any manner of pain. I saw my own house, but knew it not. When they had put me to bed I found an inexpressible sweetness in that repose; for I had been desperately tugged and lugged by those poor people who had taken the pains to carry me upon their arms a very great and a very rough way, and had in so doing all quite tired out

themselves, twice or thrice one after another. They offered me several remedies, but I would take none, certainly believing that I was mortally wounded in the head. And, in earnest, it had been a very happy death, for the weakness of my understanding deprived me of the faculty of discerning, and that of my body of the sense of feeling; I was suffering myself to glide away so sweetly and after so soft and easy a manner, that I scarce find any other action less troublesome than that was. But when I came again to myself and to resume my faculties:—

"When at length my lost senses again returned,"

which was two or three hours after, I felt myself on a sudden involved in terrible pain, having my limbs battered and ground with my fall, and was so ill for two or three nights after, that I thought I was once more dying again, but a more painful death, having concluded myself as good as dead before, and to this hour am sensible of the bruises of that terrible shock. I will not here omit, that the last thing I could make them beat into my head, was the memory of this accident, and I had it over and over again repeated to me, whither I was going, from whence I came, and at what time of the day this mischance befell me, before I could comprehend it. As to the manner of my fall, that was concealed from me in favor to him who had been the occasion, and other flim-flams were invented. But a long time after, and the very next day that my memory began to return and to represent to me the state wherein I was, at the instant that I perceived this horse coming full drive upon me (for I had seen him at my heels, and gave myself for gone, but this thought had been so sudden, that fear had had no leisure to introduce itself) it seemed to me like a flash of lightning that had pierced my soul, and that I came from the other world.

This long story of so light an accident would appear vain enough, were it not for the knowledge I have gained by it for my own use; for I do really find, that to get acquainted with death, needs no more but nearly to approach it. Every one, as Pliny says, is a good doctrine to himself, provided he be capable of discovering himself near at hand. Here, this is not my doctrine, 'tis my study; and is not the lesson of another, but my own; and if I communicate it, it ought not to be ill taken, for that which is of use to me, may also, peradventure, be useful to another. As to the rest, I spoil nothing, I make use of nothing but my own; and if I play the fool, 'tis at my own expense, and nobody else is concerned in't; for 'tis a folly that will die with me, and that no one is to inherit. We hear but of two or three of the

ancients, who have beaten this path, and yet I cannot say if it was after this manner, knowing no more of them but their names. No one since has followed the track: ’tis a rugged road, more so than it seems, to follow a pace so rambling and uncertain, as that of the soul; to penetrate the dark profundities of its intricate internal windings; to choose and lay hold of so many little nimble motions; ’tis a new and extraordinary undertaking, and that withdraws us from the common and most recommended employments of the world. ’Tis now many years since that my thoughts have had no other aim and level than myself, and that I have only pried into and studied myself: or, if I study any other thing, ’tis to apply it to or rather in myself. And yet I do not think it a fault, if, as others do by other much less profitable sciences, I communicate what I have learned in this, though I am not very well pleased with my own progress. There is no description so difficult, nor doubtless of so great utility, as that of a man’s self: and withal, a man must curl his hair and set out and adjust himself, to appear in public: now I am perpetually tricking myself out, for I am eternally upon my own description. Custom has made all speaking of a man’s self vicious, and positively interdicts it, in hatred to the boasting so far behind them. No particular quality that seems inseparable from the testimony men give of themselves:—

“The escape from a fault leads into a vice.”

Instead of blowing the child’s nose, this is to take his nose off altogether. I think the remedy worse than the disease. But, allowing it to be true that it must of necessity be presumption to entertain people with discourses of one’s self, I ought not, pursuing my general design, to forbear an action that publishes this infirmity of mine, nor conceal the fault which I not only practise but profess. Notwithstanding, to speak my thought freely, I think that the custom of condemning wine, because some people will be drunk, is itself to be condemned; a man cannot abuse anything but what is good in itself; and I believe that this rule has only regard to the popular vice. They are bits for calves, with which neither the saints whom we hear speak so highly of themselves, nor the philosophers, nor the divines will be curbed; neither will I, who am as little the one as the other. If they do not write of it expressly, at all events, when the occasions arise, they don’t hesitate to put themselves on the public highway. Of what does Socrates treat more largely than of himself? To what does he more direct and address the discourses of his disciples, than to speak of themselves, not of the lesson

in their book, but of the essence and motion of their souls? We confess ourselves religiously to God and our confessor; as our neighbors do to all the people. But some will answer that we there speak nothing but accusation against ourselves; why then, we say all; for our very virtue itself is faulty and penetrable. My trade and art is to live; he that forbids me to speak according to my own sense, experience, and practice, may as well enjoin an architect not to speak of building according to his own knowledge, but according to that of his neighbor; according to the knowledge of another, and not according to his own. If it be vainglory for a man to publish his own virtues, why does not Cicero prefer the eloquence of Hortensius, and Hortensius that of Cicero? Peradventure they mean that I should give testimony of myself by works and effects, not barely by words. I chiefly paint my thoughts, a subject void of form and incapable of operative production; ’tis all that I can do to couch it in this airy body of the voice; the wisest and devoutest men have lived in the greatest care to avoid all apparent effects. Effects would more speak of fortune than of me; they manifest their own office and not mine, but uncertainly and by conjecture; patterns of some one particular virtue. I expose myself entire; ’tis a body where, at one view, the veins, muscles, and tendons are apparent, every one of them in its proper place; here the effects of a cold; there of the heart beating, very dubiously. I do not write my own acts, but myself and my essence.

I am of opinion that a man must be very cautious how he values himself, and equally conscientious to give a true report, be it better or worse, impartially. If I thought myself perfectly good and wise, I would rattle it out to some purpose. To speak less of one’s self than what one really is is folly, not modesty; and to take that for current pay which is under a man’s value is pusillanimity and cowardice, according to Aristotle. No virtue assists itself with falsehood; truth is never matter of error. To speak more of one’s self than is really true is not always mere presumption; ’tis, moreover, very often folly; to be immeasurably pleased with what one is, and fall into an indiscreet self-love, is in my opinion the substance of this vice. The most sovereign remedy to cure it, is to do quite contrary to what these people direct who, in forbidding men to speak of themselves, consequently, at the same time, interdict thinking of themselves too. Pride dwells in the thought; the tongue can have but a very little share in it.

They fancy that to think of one’s self is to be delighted with one’s self; to frequent and converse with one’s self, to be over-indulgent; but this excess springs only in those who take but a superficial view of themselves, and dedicate their main inspection to their affairs; who call it mere reverie and idleness to occupy one’s self with one’s self, and the building one’s self up a mere building of castles in the air; who look upon themselves as a third person only, a stranger. If any one be in rapture with his own knowledge, looking only on those below him, let him but turn his eye upward towards past ages, and his pride will be abated, when he shall there find so many thousand wits that trample him under foot. If he enter into a flattering presumption of his personal valor, let him but recollect the lives of Scipio, Epaminondas; so many armies, so many nations, that leave him can make any man proud, that will at the same time put the many other weak and imperfect ones he has in the other scale, and the nothingness of human condition to make up the weight. Because Socrates had alone digested to purpose the precept of his god, “to know himself” and by that study arrived at the perfection of setting himself at nought, he only was reputed worthy the title of a sage. Whosoever shall so know himself, let him boldly speak it out.

OF RECOMPENSES OF HONOR

THEY WHO write the life of Augustus Caesar, observe this in his military discipline, that he was wonderfully liberal of gifts to men of merit, but that as to the true recompenses of honor he was as sparing; yet he himself had been gratified by his uncle with all the military recompenses before he had ever been in the field. It was a pretty invention, and received into most governments of the world, to institute certain vain and in themselves valueless distinctions to honor and recompense virtue, such as the crowns of laurel, oak, and myrtle, the particular fashion of some garment, the privilege to ride in a coach in the city, or at night with a torch, some peculiar place assigned in public assemblies, the prerogative of certain additional names and titles, certain distinctions in the bearing of coats of arms, and the like, the use of which, according to the several humors of nations, has been variously received, and yet continues.

We in France, as also several of our neighbors, have orders of knighthood that are instituted only for this end. And ’tis, in earnest, a very good and profitable custom to find out an acknowledgment for the worth of rare and excellent men, and to satisfy them with rewards that are not at all chargeable either to prince or people. And that which has been always found by ancient experience, and which we have heretofore observed among ourselves, that men of quality have ever been more jealous of such recompenses than of those wherein there was gain and profit, is not without very good ground and reason. If with the reward, which ought to be simply a recompense of honor, they should mix other commodities and add riches, this mixture, instead of procuring an increase of estimation, would debase and abate it. The Order of St. Michael, which has been so long in repute amongst us, had no greater commodity than that it had no communication with any other commodity, which produced this effect, that formerly there was no office or title whatever to which the gentry pretended with so great desire and affection as they did to that; no quality that carried with it more respect and grandeur, valor and worth more willingly embracing and with greater ambition aspiring to a recompense purely its own, and rather glorious than profitable. For, in truth, other gifts have not so great a dignity of usage, by reason they are laid out upon all sorts of occasions; with money a man pays the wages of a servant, the diligence of a courier,

dancing, vaulting, speaking and the meanest offices we receive; nay, and reward vice with it too, as flattery, treachery, and pimping; and therefore ’tis no wonder if virtue less desires and less willingly receives this common sort of payment, than that which is proper and peculiar to her, throughout generous and noble. Augustus had reason to be more sparing of this than the other, insomuch that honor is a privilege which derives its principal essence from rarity; and so virtue itself:—

“To whom no one is ill who can be good?”

We do not intend it for a commendation when we say that such a one is careful in the education of his children, by reason it is a common act, how just and well done soever; no more than we commend a great tree, where the whole forest is the same. I do not think that any citizen of Sparta glorified himself much upon his valor, it being the universal virtue of the whole nation; and as little upon his fidelity and contempt of riches. There is no recompense becomes virtue, how great soever, that is once passed into a custom; and I know not withal whether we can ever call it great, being common.

Seeing, then, that these remunerations of honor have no other value and estimation but only this, that few people enjoy them, ’tis but to be liberal of them to bring them down to nothing. And though there should be now more men found than in former times worthy of our order, the estimation of it nevertheless should not be abated, nor the honor made cheap; and it may easily happen that more may merit it; for there is no virtue that so easily spreads as that of military valor. There is another virtue, true, perfect, and philosophical, of which I do not speak, and only make use of the word in our common acceptation, much greater than this and more full, which is a force and assurance of the soul, equally despising all sorts of adverse accidents, equable, uniform, and constant, of which ours is no more than one little ray. Use, education, example, and custom can do all in all to the establishment of that whereof I am speaking, and with great facility render it common, as by the experience of our civil wars is manifest enough; and whoever could at this time unite us all, Catholic and Huguenot, into one body, and set us upon some brave common enterprise, we should again make our ancient military reputation flourish. It is most certain that in times past the recompense of this order had not only a regard to valor, but had a further prospect; it never was the reward of a valiant soldier but of a great captain; the science of obeying was not reputed worthy of so

honorable a guerdon. There was therein a more universal military expertness required, and that comprehended the most and the greatest qualities of a military man:—

“For the arts of soldiery and generalship are not the same,”

as also, besides, a condition suitable to such a dignity. But, I say, though more men were worthy than formerly, yet ought it not to be more liberally distributed, and it were better to fall short in not giving it at all to whom it should be due, than for ever to lose, as we have lately done, the fruit of so profitable an invention. No man of spirit will design to advantage himself with what is in common with many; and such of the present time as have least merited this recompense themselves make the greater show of disdaining it, in order thereby to be ranked with those to whom so much wrong has been done by the unworthy conferring and debasing the distinction which was their particular right.

Now, to expect that in obliterating and abolishing this, suddenly to create and bring into credit a like institution, is not a proper attempt for so licentious and so sick a time as this wherein we now are; and it will fall out that the last will from its birth incur the same inconveniences that have ruined the other. The rules for dispensing this new order had need to be extremely clipped and bound under great restrictions, to give it authority; and this tumultuous season is incapable of such a curb: besides that, before this can be brought into repute, ’tis necessary that the memory of the first, and of the contempt into which it is fallen, be buried in oblivion.

This place might naturally enough admit of some discourse upon the consideration of valor, and the difference of this virtue from others; but, Plutarch having so often handled this subject, I should give myself an unnecessary trouble to repeat what he has said. But this is worth considering: that our nation places valor, vaillance, in the highest degree of virtue, as its very word evidences, being derived from valeur, and that, according to our use, when we say a man of high worth—a good man in our court style—’tis to say a valiant man, after the Roman way; for the general appellation of virtue with them takes etymology from vis, force. The proper, sole, and essential profession of the French noblesse is that of arms: and ’tis likely that the first virtue which discovered itself amongst men and has given to some advantage over others, was that by which the strongest and most valiant have mastered the weaker, and acquired a particular authority and reputation, whence came to it that dignified appellation; or else, that

these nations, being very warlike, gave the pre-eminence to that of the virtues which was most familiar to them; just as our passion and the feverish solicitude we have of the chastity of women occasions that to say, a good woman, a woman of worth, a woman of honor and virtue, signifies merely a chaste woman: as if, to oblige them to that one duty, we were indifferent as to all the rest, and gave them the reins in all other faults whatever to compound for that one of incontinence.

The First Born. From painting by Amos Cassioli.

OF THE AFFECTION OF FATHERS TO THEIR CHILDREN.

To Madame D'Estissac.

MADAM, IF the strangeness and novelty of my subject, which are wont to give value to things, do not save me, I shall never come off with honor from this foolish attempt: but 'tis so fantastic, and carries a face so unlike the common use, that this, peradventure, may make it pass. 'Tis a melancholic humor, and consequently a humor very much an enemy to my natural complexion, engendered by the pensiveness of the solitude into which for some years past I have retired myself, that first put into my head this idle fancy of writing. Wherein, finding myself totally unprovided and empty of other matter, I presented myself to myself for argument and subject. 'Tis the only book in the world of its kind, and of a wild and extravagant design. There is nothing worth remark in this affair but that extravagancy: for in a subject so vain and frivolous, the best workman in the world could not have given it a form fit to recommend it to any manner of esteem.

Now, madam, having to draw my own picture to the life, I had omitted one important feature, had I not therein represented the honor I have ever had for you and your merits; which I have purposely chosen to say in the beginning of this chapter, by reason that amongst the many other excellent qualities you are mistress of, that of the tender love you have manifested to your children, is seated in one of the highest places. Whoever knows at what age Monsieur D'Estissac, your husband, left you a widow, the great and honorable matches that have since been offered to you, as many as to any lady of your condition in France, the constancy and steadiness wherewith, for so many years, you have sustained so many sharp difficulties, the burden and conduct of affairs, which have persecuted you in every corner of the kingdom, and are not yet weary of tormenting you, and the happy direction you have given to all these, by your sole prudence or good fortune, will easily conclude with me that we have not so vivid an example as yours of maternal affection in our times. I praise God, madam, that it has been so well employed; for the great hopes Monsieur D'Estissac, your son, gives of himself, render sufficient assurance that when he comes

of age you will reap from him all the obedience and gratitude of a very good man. But, forasmuch as by reason of his tender years, he has not been capable of taking notice of those offices of extremest value he has in so great number received from you, I will, if these papers shall one day happen to fall into his hands, when I shall neither have mouth nor speech left to deliver it to him, that he shall receive from me a true account of those things, which shall be more effectually manifested to him by their own effects, by which he will understand that there is not a gentleman in France who stands more indebted to a mother's care; and that he cannot, in the future, give a better nor more certain testimony of his own worth and virtue than by acknowledging you for that excellent mother you are.

If there be any law truly natural, that is to say, any instinct that is seen universally and perpetually imprinted in both beasts and men (which is not without controversy), I can say, that in my opinion, next to the care every animal has of its own preservation, and to avoid that which may hurt him, the affection that the beggetter bears to his offspring holds the second place in this rank. And seeing that nature appears to have recommended it to us, having regard to the extension and progression of the successive pieces of this machine of hers, 'tis no wonder if, on the contrary, that of children towards their parents is not so great. To which we may add this other Aristotelian consideration, that he who confers a benefit on any one, loves him better than he is beloved by him again: that he to whom is owing, loves better than he who owes; and that every artificer is fonder of his work, than, if that work had sense, it would be of him; by reason that it is dear to us to be, and to be consists in movement and action; therefore every one has in some sort a being in his work. He who confers a benefit exercises a fine and honest action; he who receives it exercises the useful only. Now the useful is much less lovable than the honest; the honest is stable and permanent, supplying him who has done it with a continual gratification. The useful loses itself, easily slides away, and the memory of it is neither so fresh nor so pleasing. Those things are dearest to us that have cost us most, and giving is more chargeable than receiving.

Since it has pleased God to endue us with some capacity of reason, to the end we may not, like brutes, be servilely subject and enslaved to the laws common to both, but that we should by judgment and a voluntary liberty apply ourselves to them, we ought, indeed, something to yield to the simple authority of nature, but not suffer ourselves to be tyrannically

hurried away and transported by her; reason alone should have the conduct of our inclinations. I, for my part, have a strange disgust for those propensions that are started in us without the mediation and direction of the judgment, as, upon the subject I am speaking of, I cannot entertain that passion of dandling and caressing infants scarcely born, having as yet neither motion of soul nor shape of body distinguishable, by which they can render themselves amiable, and have not willingly suffered them to be nursed near me. A true and regular affection ought to spring and increase with the knowledge they give us of themselves, and then, if they are worthy of it, the natural propension walking hand in hand with reason, to cherish them with a truly paternal love; and so to judge, also, if they be otherwise, still rendering ourselves to reason, notwithstanding the inclination of nature. ’Tis oft-times quite otherwise; and, most commonly, we find ourselves more taken with the running up and down, the games, and puerile simplicities of our children, than we do, afterwards, with their most complete actions; as if we had loved them for our sport, like monkeys, and not as men; and some there are, who are very liberal in buying them balls to play withal, who are very close-handed for the least necessary expense when they come to age. Nay, it looks as if the jealousy of seeing them appear in and enjoy the world when we are about to leave it, rendered us more niggardly and stingy towards them; it vexes us that they tread upon our heels, as if to solicit us to go out; if this were to be feared, since the order of things will have it so that they cannot, to speak the truth, be nor live, but at the expense of our being and life, we should never meddle with being fathers at all.

For my part, I think it cruelty and injustice not to receive them into the share and society of our goods, and not to make them partakers in the intelligence of our domestic affairs when they are capable, and not to lessen and contract our own expenses to make the more room for theirs, seeing we beget them to that effect. ’Tis unjust that an old fellow, broken and half dead, should alone, in a corner of the chimney, enjoy the money that would suffice for the maintenance and advancement of many children, and suffer them, in the meantime, to lose their best years for want of means to advance themselves in the public service and the knowledge of men. A man by this course drives them to despair, and to seek out by any means, how unjust or dishonorable soever, to provide for their own support: as I have, in my time, seen several young men of good extraction so addicted to stealing, that no

correction could cure them of it. I know one of a very good family, to whom, at the request of a brother of his, a very honest and brave gentleman, I once spoke on this account, who made answer, and confessed to me roundly, that he had been put upon this paltry practice by the severity and avarice of his father; but that he was now so accustomed to it he could not leave it off. And, at that very time, he was trapped stealing a lady's rings, having come into her chamber, as she was dressing with several others. He put me in mind of a story I had heard of another gentleman, so perfect and accomplished in this fine trade in his youth, that, after he came to his estate and resolved to give it over, he could not hold his hands, nevertheless, if he passed by a shop where he saw anything he liked, from catching it up, though it put him to the shame of sending afterwards to pay for it. And I have myself seen several so habituated to this quality that even amongst their comrades they could not forbear filching, though with intent to restore what they had taken. I am a Gascon, and yet there is no vice I so little understand as that; I hate it something more by disposition than I condemn it by reason; I do not so much as desire anything of another man's. This province of ours is, in plain truth, a little more decried than the other parts of the kingdom; and yet we have several times seen, in our times, men of good families of other provinces, in the hands of justice, convicted of abominable thefts. I fear this vice is, in some sort, to be attributed to the fore-mentioned vice of the fathers.

And if a man should tell me, as a lord of very good understanding once did, that "he hoarded up wealth, not to extract any other fruit and use from his parsimony, but to make himself honored and sought after by his relations; and that age having deprived him of all other power, it was the only remaining remedy to maintain his authority in his family, and to keep him from being neglected and despised by all around," in truth, not only old age, but all other imbecility, according to Aristotle, is the promoter of avarice; that is something, but it is physic for a disease that a man should prevent the birth of. A father is very miserable who has no other hold on his children's affection than the need they have of his assistance, if that can be called affection; he must render himself worthy to be respected by his virtue and wisdom, and beloved by his kindness and the sweetness of his manners; even the very ashes of a rich matter have their value; and we are wont to have the bones and relics of worthy men in regard and reverence. No old age can be so decrepit in a man who has passed his life in honor, but it must

be venerable, especially to his children, whose soul he must have trained up to their duty by reason, not by necessity and the need they have of him, nor by harshness and compulsion:—

> *“He wanders far from the truth, in my opinion, who thinks that government more absolute and durable which is acquired by force than that which is attached to friendship.”*

I condemn all violence in the education of a tender soul that is designed for honor and liberty. There is I know not what of servile in rigor and constraint; and I am of opinion that what is not to be done by reason, prudence, and address, is never to be effected by force. I myself was brought up after that manner; and they tell me that in all my first age I never felt the rod but twice, and then very slightly. I practised the same method with my children, who all of them died at nurse, except Leonora, my only daughter, and who arrived to the age of five years and upward without other correction for her childish faults (her mother’s indulgence easily concurring) than words only, and those very gentle; in which kind of proceeding, though my end and expectation should be both frustrated, there are other causes enough to lay the fault on without blaming my discipline, which I know to be natural and just, and I should, in this, have yet been more religious towards the males, as less born to subjection and more free; and I should have made it my business to fill their hearts with ingenuousness and freedom. I have never observed other effects of whipping than to render boys more cowardly, or more wilfully obstinate.

Do we desire to be beloved of our children? Will we remove from them all occasion of wishing our death though no occasion of so horrid a wish can either be just or excusable?—

> *“No wickedness has reason.”*

Let us reasonably accommodate their lives with what is in our power. In order to this, we should not marry so young that our age shall in a manner be confounded with theirs; for this inconvenience plunges us into many very great difficulties, and especially the gentry of the nation, who are of a condition wherein they have little to do, and who live upon their rents only: for elsewhere, with people who live by their labor, the plurality and company of children is an increase to the common stock; they are so many new tools and instruments wherewith to grow rich.

I married at three-and-thirty years of age, and concur in the opinion of thirty-five, which is said to be that of Aristotle. Plato will have nobody

marry before thirty; but he has reason to laugh at those who undertook the work of marriage after five-and-fifty, and condemns their offspring as unworthy of aliment and life. Thales gave the truest limits, who, young and being importuned by his mother to marry, answered, “That it was too soon,” and, being grown into years and urged again, “That it was too late.” A man must deny opportunity to every inopportune action. The ancient Gauls looked upon it as a very horrid thing for a man to have society with a woman before he was twenty years of age, and strictly recommended to the men who designed themselves for war the keeping their virginity till well grown in years, forasmuch as courage is abated and diverted by intercourse with women:—

> *“Now, married to a young wife and happy in children, he was demoralized by his love as father and husband.”*

Muley Hassam, king of Tunis, he whom the Emperor Charles V. restored to his kingdom, reproached the memory of his father Mahomet with the frequentation of women, styling him loose, effeminate, and a getter of children. The Greek history observes of Iccus the Tarentine, of Chryso, Astyllus, Diopompos, and others, that to keep their bodies in order for the Olympic games and such like exercises, they denied themselves during that preparation all commerce with Venus. In a certain country of the Spanish Indies men were not permitted to marry till after forty years of age, and yet the girls were allowed to marry at ten. ’Tis not time for a gentleman of five-and-thirty years old to give place to his son who is twenty; he is himself in a condition to serve both in the expeditions of war and in the court of his prince; has need of all his appurtenances; and yet, doubtless, he ought to surrender a share, but not so great a one as to forget himself for others; and for such a one the answer that fathers have ordinarily in their mouths, “I will not put off my clothes, before I go to bed,” serves well.

But a father worn out with age and infirmities, and deprived by his weakness and want of health of the common society of men, wrongs himself and his to amass a great heap of treasure. He has lived long enough, if he be wise, to have a mind to strip himself to go to bed, not to his very shirt, I confess, but to that and a good, warm dressing-gown; the remaining pomps, of which he has no further use, he ought voluntarily to surrender to those, to whom by the order of nature they belong. ’Tis reason he should refer the use of those things to them, seeing that nature has reduced him to such a state that he cannot enjoy them himself; otherwise there is doubtless

malice and envy in the case. The greatest act of the Emperor Charles V. was that when, in imitation of some of the ancients of his own quality, confessing it but reason to strip ourselves when our clothes encumber and grow too heavy for us, and to lie down when our legs begin to fail us, he resigned his possessions, grandeur, and power to his son, when he found himself failing in vigor, and steadiness for the conduct of his affairs suitable with the glory he had therein acquired:—

"Dismiss the old horse in good time, lest, failing in the lists, the spectators laugh."

This fault of not perceiving betimes and of not being sensible of the feebleness and extreme alteration that age naturally brings both upon body and mind, which, in my opinion, is equal, if indeed the soul has not more than half, has lost the reputation of most of the great men in the world. I have known in my time, and been intimately acquainted with persons of great authority, whom one might easily discern marvellously lapsed from the sufficiency I knew they were once endued with, by the reputation they had acquired in their former years, whom I could heartily, for their own sakes, have wished at home at their ease, discharged of their public or military employments, which were now grown too heavy for their shoulders. I have formerly been very familiar in a gentleman's house, a widower and very old, though healthy and cheerful enough: this gentleman had several daughters to marry and a son already of ripe age, which brought upon him many visitors, and a great expense, neither of which well pleased him, not only out of consideration of frugality, but yet more for having, by reason of his age, entered into a course of life far differing from ours. I told him one day a little boldly, as I used to do, that he would do better to give us younger folk room, and to leave his principal house (for he had but that well placed and furnished) to his son, and himself retire to an estate he had hard by, where nobody would trouble his repose, seeing he could not otherwise avoid being importuned by us, the condition of his children considered. He took my advice afterwards, and found an advantage in so doing.

I do not mean that a man should so install them as not to reserve to himself a liberty to retract; I, who am now arrived to the age wherein such things are fit to be done, would resign to them the enjoyment of my house and goods, but with a power of revocation if they should give me cause to alter my mind; I would leave to them the use, that being no longer

convenient for me; and, of the general authority and power over all, would reserve as much as I thought good to myself; having always held that it must needs be a great satisfaction to an aged father himself to put his children into the way of governing his affairs, and to have power during his own life to control their behavior, supplying them with instruction and advice from his own experience, and himself to transfer the ancient honor and order of his house into the hands of those who are to succeed him, and by that means to satisfy himself as to the hopes he may conceive of their future conduct. And in order to this I would not avoid their company; I would observe them near at hand, and partake, according to the condition of my age, of their feasts and jollities. If I did not live absolutely amongst them, which I could not do without annoying them and their friends, by reason of the morosity of my age and the restlessness of my infirmities, and without violating also the rules and order of living I should then have set down to myself, I would, at least, live near them in some retired part of my house, not the best in show, but the most commodious. Nor as I saw, some years ago, a dean of St. Hilary of Poitiers, by his melancholy given up to such a solitude, that at the time I came into his chamber it had been two and twenty years that he had not stepped one foot out of it, and yet had all his motions free and easy, and was in good health, saving a cold that fell upon his lungs; he would, hardly once in a week, suffer any one to come in to see him; he always kept himself shut up in his chamber alone, except that a servant brought him, once a day, something to eat, and did then but just come in and go out again. His employment was to walk up and down, and read some book, for he was a bit of a scholar; but, as to the rest, obstinately bent to die in this retirement, as he soon after did. I would endeavor by pleasant conversation to create in my children a warm and unfeigned friendship and good-will towards me, which in well-descended natures is not hard to do; for if they be furious brutes, of which this age of ours produces thousands, we are then to hate and avoid them as such.

I am angry at the custom of forbidding children to call their father by the name of father, and to enjoin them another, as more full of respect and reverence, as if nature had not sufficiently provided for our authority. We call Almighty God Father, and disdain to have our children call us so; I have reformed this error in my family. And ’tis also folly and injustice to deprive children, when grown up, of familiarity with their father, and to carry a scornful and austere countenance toward them, thinking by that to

keep them in awe and obedience; for it is a very idle farce that, instead of producing the effect designed, renders fathers distasteful, and, which is worse, ridiculous to their own children. They have youth and vigor in possession, and consequently the breath and favor of the world; and therefore receive these fierce and tyrannical looks—mere scarecrows—of a man without blood, either in his heart or veins, with mockery and contempt. Though I could make myself feared, I had yet much rather make myself beloved: there are so many sorts of defects in old age, so much imbecility, and it is so liable to contempt, that the best acquisition a man can make is the kindness and affection of his own family; command and fear are no longer his weapons. Such a one I have known who, having been very imperious in his youth, when he came to be old, though he might have lived at his full ease, would ever strike, rant, swear, and curse: the most violent householder in France: fretting himself with unnecessary suspicion and vigilance. And all this rumble and clutter but to make his family cheat him the more; of his barn, his kitchen, cellar, nay, and his very purse too, others had the greatest use and share, whilst he keeps his keys in his pocket much more carefully than his eyes. Whilst he hugs himself with the pitiful frugality of a niggard table, everything goes to rack and ruin in every corner of his house, in play, drink, all sorts of profusion, making sport in their junkets with his vain anger and fruitless parsimony. Every one is a sentinel against him, and if, by accident, any wretched fellow that serves him is of another humor, and will not join with the rest, he is presently rendered suspected to him, a bait that old age very easily bites at of itself. How often has this gentleman boasted to me in how great awe he kept his family, and how exact an obedience and reverence they paid him! How clearly he saw into his own affairs!

“He alone is ignorant of all that is passing.”

I do not know any one that can muster more parts, both natural and acquired, proper to maintain dominion, than he; yet he is fallen from it like a child. For this reason it is that I have picked out him, amongst several others that I know of the same humor, for the greatest example. It were matter for a question in the schools, whether he is better thus or otherwise. In his presence, all submit to and bow to him, and give so much way to his vanity that nobody ever resists him; he has his fill of assents, of seeming fear, submission, and respect. Does he turn away a servant? he packs up his bundle, and is gone; but ’tis no further than just out of his sight: the steps of

old age are so slow, the senses so troubled, that he will live and do his old office in the same house a year together without being perceived. And after a fit interval of time, letters are pretended to come from a great way off, very humble, suppliant, and full of promises of amendment, by virtue of which he is again received into favor. Does Monsieur make any bargain, or prepare any despatch that does not please? ’tis suppressed, and causes afterwards forged to excuse the want of execution in the one or answer in the other. No letters being first brought to him, he never sees any but those that shall seem fit for his knowledge. If by accident they fall first into his own hand, being used to trust somebody to read them to him, he reads extempore what he thinks fit, and often makes such a one ask him pardon who abuses and rails at him in his letter. In short, he sees nothing, but by an image prepared and designed beforehand and the most satisfactory they can invent, not to rouse and awaken his ill humor and choler. I have seen, under various aspects, enough of these modes of domestic government, longenduring, constant, to the like effect.

Women are evermore addicted to cross their husbands: they lay hold with both hands on all occasions to contradict and oppose them; the first excuse serves for a plenary justification. I have seen one who robbed her husband wholesale, that, as she told her confessor, she might distribute the more liberal alms. Let who will trust to that religious dispensation. No management of affairs seems to them of sufficient dignity, if proceeding from the husband’s assent; they must usurp it either by insolence or cunning, and always injuriously, or else it has not the grace and authority they desire. When, as in the case I am speaking of, ’tis against a poor old man and for the children, then they make use of this title to serve their passion with glory; and, as for a common service, easily cabal and combine against his government and dominion. If they be males grown up in full and flourishing health, they presently corrupt, either by force or favor, steward, receivers, and all the rout. Such as have neither wife nor son do not so easily fall into this misfortune; but withal more cruelly and unworthily. Cato the elder in his time said: So many servants, so many enemies; consider, then, whether according to the vast difference between the purity of the age he lived in and the corruption of this of ours, he does not seem to show us that wife, son, and servant, are so many enemies to us? ’Tis well for old age that it is always accompanied by want of observation, ignorance, and a proneness to being deceived. For should we see how we are used and

would not acquiesce, what would become of us? especially in such an age as this, where the very judges who are to determine our controversies are usually partisans to the young, and interested in the cause. In case the discovery of this cheating escape me, I cannot at least fail to discern that I am very fit to be cheated. And can a man ever enough exalt the value of a friend, in comparison with these civil ties? The very image of it which I see in beasts, so pure and uncorrupted, how religiously do I respect it! If others deceive me, yet do I not, at least, deceive myself in thinking I am able to defend myself from them, or in cudgelling my brains to make myself so. I protect myself from such treasons in my own bosom, not by an unquiet and tumultuous curiosity, but rather by diversion and resolution. When I hear talk of any one's condition, I never trouble myself to think of him; I presently turn my eyes upon myself to see in what condition I am; whatever concerns another relates to me; the accident that has befallen him gives me caution, and rouses me to turn my defence that way. We every day and every hour say things of another that we might properly say of ourselves, could we but apply our observation to our own concerns, as well as extend it to others. And several authors have in this manner prejudiced their own cause by running headlong upon those they attack, and darting those shafts against their enemies, that are more properly, and with greater advantage, to be turned upon themselves.

The late Mareschal de Montluc having lost his son, who died in the island of Madeira, in truth a very worthy gentleman and of great expectation, did to me, amongst his other regrets, very much insist upon what a sorrow and heartbreaking it was that he had never made himself familiar with him; and by that humor of paternal gravity and grimace to have lost the opportunity of having an insight into and of well knowing his son, as also of letting him know the extreme affection he had for him, and the worthy opinion he had of his virtue. "That poor boy," said he, "never saw in me other than a stern and disdainful countenance, and is gone in a belief that I neither knew how to love him nor esteem him according to his desert. For whom did I reserve the discovery of that singular affection I had for him in my soul? Was it not he himself, who ought to have had all the pleasure of it, and all the obligation? I constrained and racked myself to put on and maintain this vain disguise, and have by that means deprived myself of the pleasure of his conversation, and, I doubt, in some measure, his affection, which could not but be very cold to me, having never other from

me than austerity, nor felt other than a tyrannical manner of proceeding.” I find this complaint to be rational and rightly apprehended: for, as I myself know by too certain experience, there is no so sweet consolation in the loss of friends as the conscience of having had no reserve or secret for them, and to have had with them a perfect and entire communication. Oh my friend, am I the better for being sensible of this; or am I the worse? I am, doubtless, much the better. I am consoled and honored, in the sorrow for his death. Is it not a pious and a pleasing office of my life to be always upon my friend’s obsequies? Can there be any joy equal to this privation?

I open myself to my family, as much as I can, and very willingly let them know the state of my opinion and good will towards them, as I do to everybody else: I make haste to bring out and present myself to them; for I will not have them mistaken in me, in anything. Amongst other particular customs of our ancient Gauls, this, as Caesar reports, was one, that the sons never presented themselves before their fathers, nor durst ever appear in their company in public, till they began to bear arms; as if they would intimate by this, that it was also time for their fathers to receive them into their familiarity and acquaintance.

I have observed yet another sort of indiscretion in fathers of my time, that, not contented with having deprived their children, during their own long lives, for the share they naturally ought to have had in their fortunes, they afterwards leave to their wives the same authority over their estates, and liberty to dispose of them according to their own fancy. And I have known a certain lord, one of the principal officers of the crown, who, having in reversion above fifty thousand crowns yearly revenue, died necessitous and overwhelmed with debt at above fifty years of age; his mother in her extremest decrepitude being yet in possession of all his property by the will of his father, who had, for his part, lived till near fourscore years old. This appears to me by no means reasonable. And therefore I think it of very little advantage to a man, whose affairs are well enough, to seek a wife who encumbers his estate with a very great fortune; there is no sort of foreign debt that brings more ruin to families than this: my predecessors have ever been aware of that danger and provided against it, and so have I. But those who dissuade us from rich wives, for fear they should be less tractable and kind, are out in their advice to make a man lose a real commodity for so frivolous a conjecture. It costs an unreasonable woman no more to pass over one reason than another; they cherish

themselves most where they are most wrong. Injustice allures them, as the honor of their virtuous actions does the good; and the more riches they bring with them, they are so much the more good-natured, as women, who are handsome, are all the more inclined and proud to be chaste.

'Tis reasonable to leave the administration of affairs to the mothers, till the children are old enough, according to law, to manage them; but the father has brought them up very ill, if he cannot hope that, when they come to maturity, they will have more wisdom and ability in the management of affairs than his wife, considering the ordinary weakness of the sex. It were, notwithstanding, to say the truth, more against nature to make the mothers depend upon the discretion of their children; they ought to be plentifully provided for, to maintain themselves according to their quality and age, by reason that necessity and indigence are much more unbecoming and insupportable to them than to men; the son should rather be cut short than the mother.

In general, the most judicious distribution of our goods, when we come to die, is, in my opinion, to let them be distributed according to the custom of the country; the laws have considered the matter better than we know how to do, and 'tis wiser to let them fail in their appointment, than rashly to run the hazard of miscarrying in ours. Nor are the goods properly ours, since, by civil prescription and without us, they are all destined to certain successors. And although we have some liberty beyond that, yet I think we ought not, without great and manifest cause, to take away that from one which his fortune has allotted him, and to which the public equity gives him title; and that it is against reason to abuse this liberty, in making it serve our own frivolous and private fancies. My destiny has been kind to me in not presenting me with occasions to tempt me and divert my affection from the common and legitimate institution. I see many with whom 'tis time lost to employ a long exercise of good offices: a word ill taken obliterates ten years' merit; he is happy who is in a position to oil their goodwill at this last passage. The last action carries it: not the best and most frequent offices, but the most recent and present do the work. These are people that play with their wills as with apples or rods, to gratify or chastise every action of those who pretend to an interest in their care. 'Tis a thing of too great weight and consequence to be so tumbled and tossed and altered every moment and wherein the wise determine once for all, having above all things regard to reason and the public observance. We lay these masculine substitutions too

much to heart, proposing a ridiculous eternity to our names. We are, moreover, too superstitious in vain conjectures as to the future, that we derive from the words and actions of children. Peradventure they might have done me an injustice, in dispossessing me of my right, for having been the most dull and heavy, the most slow and unwilling at my book, not of all my brothers only, but of all the boys in the whole province: whether about learning my lesson, or about any bodily exercise. ’Tis a folly to make an election out of the ordinary course upon the credit of these divinations wherein we are so often deceived. If the ordinary rule of descent were to be violated, and the destinies corrected in the choice they have made of our heirs, one might more plausibly do it upon the account of some remarkable and enormous personal deformity, a permanent and incorrigible defect, and in the opinion of us French, who are great admirers of beauty, an important prejudice.

The pleasant dialogue betwixt Plato’s legislator and his citizens will be an ornament to this place. “What,” said they, feeling themselves about to die, “may we not dispose of our own to whom we please? Gods! what cruelty that it shall not be lawful for us, according as we have been served and attended in our sickness, in our old age, in our affairs, to give more or less to those whom we have found most diligent about us, at our own fancy and discretion!” To which the legislator answers thus: “My friends, who are now without question, very soon to die, it is hard for you in the condition you are, either to know yourselves, or what is yours, according to the delphic inscription. I, who make the laws, am of opinion, that you neither are yourselves your own, nor is that yours of which you are possessed. Both your goods and you belong to your families, as well those past as those to come; but, further, both your family and goods much more appertain to the public. Wherefore, lest any flatterer in your old age or in your sickness, or any passion of your own, should unseasonably prevail with you to make an unjust will, I shall take care to prevent that inconvenience; but, having respect both to the universal interests of the city and that of your particular family, I shall establish laws, and make it by good reasons appear, that private convenience ought to give place to the common benefit. Go then cheerfully where human necessity calls you. It is for me, who regard no more the one thing than the other, and who, as much as in me lies, am provident of the public interest, to have a care as to what you leave behind you.”

To return to my subject: it appears to me that women are very rarely born, to whom the prerogative over men, the maternal and natural excepted, is in any sort due, unless it be for the punishment of such, as in some amorous fever have voluntarily submitted themselves to them: but that in no way concerns the old ones, of whom we are now speaking. This consideration it is which has made us so willingly to enact and give force to that law, which was never yet seen by any one, by which women are excluded the succession to our crown: and there is hardly a government in the world where it is not pleaded, as it is here, by the probability of reason that authorizes it, though fortune has given it more credit in some places than in others. ’Tis dangerous to leave the disposal of our succession to their judgment, according to the choice they shall make of children, which is often fantastic and unjust; for the irregular appetites and depraved tastes they have during the time of their being with child, they have at all other times in the mind. We commonly see them fond of the most weak, ricketty, and deformed children; or of those, if they have such, as are still that which I was saying of goats was upon this account; that it is ordinary all about where I live, to see the countrywomen, when they want milk of their own for their children, to call goats to their assistance; and I have at this hour two men-servants that never sucked woman’s milk more than eight days after they were born. These goats are immediately taught to come to suckle the little children, know their voices when they cry, and come running to them. If any other than this foster-child be presented to them, they refuse to let it suck; and the child in like manner will refuse to suck another goat. I saw one the other day from whom they had taken away the goat that used to nourish it, by reason the father had only borrowed it of a neighbor; the child would not touch any other they could bring, and died, doubtless of hunger. Beasts as easily alter and corrupt their natural affection as we: I believe that in what Herodotus relates of a certain district of Lybia, there are many mistakes; he says that the women are there in common; but that the child, so soon as it can go, finds him out in the crowd for his father, to whom he is first led by his natural inclination.

Now, to consider this simple reason for loving our children, that we have begot them, therefore calling them our second selves, it appears, methinks, that there is another kind of production proceeding from us, that is of no less recommendation: for that which we engender by the soul, the issue of our understanding, courage, and abilities, springs from nobler parts

than those of the body, and that are much more our own: we are both father and mother in this generation. These cost us a great deal more and bring us more honor, if they have anything of good in them. For the value of our other children is much more theirs than ours; the share we have in them is very little; but of these, all the beauty, all the grace and value, are ours; and also they more vividly represent us than the others. Plato adds, that these are immortal children that immortalize and deify their fathers, as Lycurgus, Solon, Minos. Now, histories being full of examples of common affection of fathers to their children, it seems not altogether improper to introduce some few of hanging at the breast. For, not having sufficient force of reason to choose and embrace that which is most worthy, they the more willingly suffer themselves to be carried away, where the impressions of nature are most alone; like animals that know their young no longer than they give them suck. As to the rest, it is easy by experience to be discerned that this natural affection to which we give so great authority has but very weak roots. For a very little profit, we every day tear their own children out of the mothers' arms, and make them take ours in their room: we make them abandon their own to some pitiful nurse, to whom we disdain to commit ours, or to some she-goat, forbidding them, not only to give them suck, what danger soever they run thereby, but, moreover, to take any manner of care of them, that they may wholly be occupied with the care of and attendance upon ours; and we see in most of them an adulterate affection, more vehement than the natural, begotten by custom toward the foster children, and a greater solicitude for the preservation of those they have taken charge of, than of their own. And this other kind. Heliodorus, that good bishop of Trikka, rather chose to lose the dignity, profit, and devotion of so venerable a prelacy, than to lose his daughter; a daughter that continues to this day very graceful and comely; but, peradventure, a little too curiously and wantonly tricked, and too amorous for an ecclesiastical and sacredotal daughter. There was one Labienus at Rome, a man of great worth and authority, and amongst other qualities excellent in all sorts of literature, who was, as I take it, the son of that great Labienus, the chief of Caesar's captains in the wars of Gaul; and who, afterwards, siding with Pompey the Great, so valiantly maintained his cause, till he was by Caesar defeated in Spain. This Labienus, of whom I am now speaking, had several enemies, envious of his good qualities, and, 'tis likely, the courtiers and minions of the emperors of his time who were very angry at his freedom

and the paternal humor which he yet retained against tyranny, with which it is to be supposed he had tinctured his books and writings. His adversaries prosecuted several pieces he had published before the magistrate at Rome, and prevailed so far against him, as to have them condemned to the fire. It was in him that this new example of punishment was begun, which was afterwards continued against others at Rome, to punish even writing and studies with death. There would not be means and matter enough of cruelty, did we not mix with them things that nature has exempted from all sense and suffering, as reputation and the products of the mind, and did we not communicate corporal punishments to the teachings and monuments of the Muses. Now, Labienus could not suffer this loss, nor survive these his so dear issue, and therefore caused himself to be conveyed and shut up alive in the monument of his ancestors, where he made shift to kill and bury himself at once. ’Tis hard to show a more vehement paternal affection than this. Cassius Severus, a man of great eloquence and his very intimate friend, seeing his books burned, cried out that by the same sentence they should as well condemn him to the fire too, seeing that he carried in his memory all that they contained. The like accident befell Cremutius Cordus, who being accused of having in his books commended Brutus and Cassius, that dirty, servile, and corrupt Senate, worthy a worse master than Tiberius, condemned his writings to the flame. He was willing to bear them company, and killed himself with fasting. The good Lucan, being condemned by that rascal Nero, at the last gasp of his life, when the greater part of his blood was already spent through the veins of his arms, which he had caused his physician to open to make him die, and when the cold had seized upon all his extremities, and began to approach his vital parts, the last thing he had in his memory was some of the verses of his Battle of Pharsalia, which he recited, dying with them in his mouth. What was this, but taking a tender and paternal leave of his children, in imitation of the valedictions and embraces, wherewith we part from ours, when we come to die, and an effect of that natural inclination, that suggests to our remembrance in this extremity those things which were dearest to us during the time of our life?

Can we believe that Epicurus who, as he says himself, dying of the intolerable pain of the stone, had all his consolation in the beauty of the doctrine he left behind him, could have received the same satisfaction from many children, though never so well-conditioned and brought up, had he had them, as he did from the production of so many rich writings? Or that,

had it been in his choice to have left behind him a deformed and untoward child or a foolish and ridiculous book, he, or any other man of his understanding, would not rather have chosen to have run the first misfortune than the other? It had been, for example, peradventure, an impiety in St. Augustin, if, on the one hand, it had been proposed to him to bury his writings, from which religion has received so great fruit, or on the other to bury his children, had he had them, had he not rather chosen to bury his children. And I know not whether I had not much rather have begot a very beautiful one, through society with the Muses, than by lying with my wife. To this, such as it is, what I give it I give absolutely and irrevocably, as men do to their bodily children. That little I have done for it, is no more at my own disposal; it may know many things that are gone from me, and from me hold that which I have not retained; and which, as well as a stranger, I should borrow thence, should I stand in need. If I am wiser than my book, it is richer than I. There are few men addicted to poetry, who would not be much prouder to be father to the Aeneid than to the handsomest youth of Rome; and who would not much better bear the loss of the one than of the other. For according to Aristotle, the poet, of all artificers, is the fondest of his work. ’Tis hard to believe that Epaminondas, who boasted that in lieu of all posterity he left two daughters behind him that would one day do their father honor (meaning the two victories he obtained over the Lacedaemonians), would willingly have consented to exchange these for the most beautiful creatures of all Greece; or that Alexander or Caesar ever wished to be deprived of the grandeur of their glorious exploits in war, for the convenience of children and heirs, how perfect and accomplished soever. Nay, I make a great question, whether Phidias or any other excellent sculptor would be so solicitous of the preservation and continuance of his natural children, as he would be of a rare statue, which with long labor and study he had perfected according to art. And to those furious and irregular passions that have sometimes inflamed fathers towards their own daughters, and mothers towards their own sons, the like is also found in this other sort of parentage: witness what is related of Pygmalion who, having made the statue of a woman of singular beauty, fell so passionately in love with this work of his, that the gods in favor of his passion inspired it with life:—

“The ivory grows soft under his touch and yields to his fingers.”

OF THE ARMS OF THE PARTHIANS

’TIS AN ill custom and unmanly that the gentlemen of our time have got, not to put on arms but just upon the point of the most extreme necessity, and to lay them by again, so soon as ever there is any show of the danger being over; hence many disorders arise; for every one bustling and running to his arms just when he should go to charge, has his cuirass to buckle on when his companions are already put to rout. Our ancestors were wont to give their headpiece, lance and gauntlets to be carried, but never put off the other pieces so long as there was any work to be done. Our troops are now cumbered and rendered unsightly with the clutter of baggage and servants who cannot be from their masters, by reason they carry their arms. Titus Livius speaking of our nation:—

> *“Bodies most impatient of labor could scarce endure to wear their arms on their shoulders.”*

Many nations do yet, and did anciently, go to war without defensive arms, or with such, at least, as were of very little proof:—

> *“To whom the coverings of the heads were the bark of the cork-tree.”*

Alexander, the most adventurous captain that ever was, very seldom wore armor, and such amongst us as slight it, do not by that much harm to the main concern; for if we see some killed for want of it, there are few less whom the lumber of arms helps to destroy, either by being overburdened, crushed, and cramped with their weight, by a rude shock, or otherwise. For, in plain truth, to observe the weight and thickness of the armor we have now in use, it seems as if we only sought to defend ourselves, and are rather loaded than secured by it. We have enough to do to support its weight, being so manacled and immured, as if we were only to contend with our own arms, and as if we had not the same obligation to defend them, that they have to defend us. Tacitus gives a pleasant description of the men-at-arms among our ancient Gauls, who were so armed as only to be able to stand, without power to harm or to be harmed, or to rise again if once struck down. Lucullus, seeing certain soldiers of the Medes, who formed the van of Tigranes’ army, heavily armed and very uneasy, as if in prisons of iron, thence conceived hopes with great ease to defeat them, and by them began his charge and victory. And now that our musketeers are in credit, I believe

some invention will be found out to immure us for our safety, and to draw us to the war in castles, such as those the ancients loaded their elephants withal.

This humor is far differing from that of the younger Scipio, who sharply reprehended his soldiers for having planted caltrops under water, in a ditch by which those of the town he held besieged might sally out upon him; saying, that those who assaulted should think of attacking, and not to fear; suspecting, with good reason, that this stop they had put to the enemies, would make themselves less vigilant upon their guard. He said also to a young man, who showed him a fine buckler he had, that he was very proud of, "It is a very fine buckler indeed, but a Roman soldier ought to repose greater confidence in his right hand than in his left."

Now 'tis nothing but the not being used to wear it that makes the weight of our armor so intolerable:—

> "*Two of the warriors, of whom I sing, had on their backs their cuirass and on their heads their casque, and never had night or day once laid them by, whilst here they were; those arms, by long practice, were grown as light to bear as a garment;*"

the Emperor Caracalla was wont to march on foot, completely armed, at the head of his army. The Roman infantry always carried not only a morion, a sword, and a shield (for as to arms, says Cicero, they were so accustomed to have them always on, that they were no more trouble to them than their own limbs:—

> "*Arma enim membra militis esse dicunt;)*"

but, moreover, fifteen days' provision, together with a certain number of stakes, wherewith to fortify their camp, sixty pounds in weight. And Marius' soldiers, laden at the same rate, were inured to march in order of battle five leagues in five hours, and sometimes, upon any urgent occasion, six. Their military discipline was much ruder than ours, and accordingly produced much greater effects. The younger Scipio, reforming his army in Spain, ordered his soldiers to eat standing, and nothing that was drest. The jeer that was given a Lacedaemonian soldier is marvellously pat to this purpose, who, in an expedition of war, was reproached for having been seen under the roof of a house: they were so inured to hardship that, let the weather be what it would, it was a shame to be seen under any other cover than the roof of heaven. We should not march our people very far at that rate.

As to what remains, Marcellinus, a man bred up in the Roman wars, curiously observes the manner of the Parthians arming themselves, and the rather, for being so different from that of the Romans. “They had,” says he, “armor so woven as to have all the scales fall over one another like so many little feathers; which did not hinder the motion of the body, and yet were of such resistance, that our darts hitting upon them, would rebound” (these were the coats of mail our forefathers were so constantly wont to use). And in another place: “they had,” says he, “strong and able horses, covered with thick tanned hides of leather, and were themselves armed cap-a-pie with great plates of iron, so artificially ordered, that in all parts of the limbs, which required bending, they lent themselves to the motion. One would have said, that they had been men of iron; having armor for the head so neatly fitted, and so naturally representing the form of a face, that they were nowhere vulnerable, save at two little round holes, that gave them a little light, corresponding with their eyes, and certain small chinks about their nostrils, through which they, with great difficulty, breathed,”

> *“Plates of steel are placed over the body so flexible that, dreadful to be seen, you would think these not living men, but moving images. The horses are similarly armed, and, secured from wounds, move their iron shoulders.”*

’Tis a description drawing very near the fully barded equipage of a man-at-arms in France. Plutarch says, that Demetrius caused two complete suits of armor to be made for himself and for Alcimus, the first warrior about him, of six score pounds weight each, whereas the ordinary suits weighed but sixty.

OF BOOKS

I MAKE no doubt but that I often happen to speak of things that are much better and more truly handled by those who are masters of the trade. You have here purely an essay of my natural parts, and not of those acquired: and whoever shall catch me tripping in ignorance, will not in any sort get the better of me; for I should be very unwilling to become responsible to another for my writings, who am not so to myself, nor satisfied with them. Whoever goes in quest of knowledge, let him fish for it where it is to be found; there is nothing I so little profess. These are fancies of my own, by which I do not pretend to discover things but to lay open myself; they may, peradventure, one day be known to me, or have formerly been, according as fortune has been able to bring me in place where they have been explained; but I have utterly forgotten it; and if I am a man of some reading, I am a man of no retention; so that I can promise no certainty, more than to make known to what point the knowledge I now have has risen. Therefore, let none lay stress upon the matter I write, but upon my method in writing it. Let them observe, in what I borrow, if I have known how to choose what is proper to raise or help the invention, which is always my own. For I make others say for me, not before but after me, what, either for want of language or want of sense, I cannot myself so well express. I do not number my borrowings, I weigh them; and had I designed to raise their value by number, I had made them twice as many; they are all, or within a very few, so famed and ancient authors, that they seem, methinks, themselves sufficiently to tell who they are, without giving me the trouble. In reasons, comparisons, and arguments, if I transplant any into my own soil, and confound them amongst my own, I purposely conceal the author, to awe the temerity of those precipitate censors who fall upon all sorts of writings, particularly the late ones, of men yet living, and in the vulgar tongue which puts every one into a capacity of criticising and which seem to convict the conception and design as vulgar also. I will have them give Plutarch a fillip on my nose, and rail against Seneca when they think they rail at me. I must shelter my own weakness under these great reputations. I shall love any one that can unplume me, that is, by clearness of understanding and judgment, and by the sole distinction of the force and beauty of the discourse. For I who, for want of memory, am at every turn at

a loss to pick them out of their national livery, am yet wise enough to know, by the measure of my own abilities, that my soil is incapable of producing any of those rich flowers that I there find growing; and that all the fruits of my own growth are not worth any one of them. For this, indeed, I hold myself responsible; if I get in my own way; if there be any vanity and defect in my writings which I do not of myself perceive nor can discern, when pointed out to me by another; for many faults escape our eye, but the infirmity of judgment consists in not being able to discern them, when by another laid open to us. Knowledge and truth may be in us without judgment, and judgment also without them; but the confession of ignorance is one of the finest and surest testimonies of judgment that I know. I have no other officer to put my writings in rank and file, but only fortune. As things come into my head, I heap them one upon another; sometimes they advance in whole bodies, sometimes in single file. I would that every one should see my natural and ordinary pace, irregular as it is; I suffer myself to jog on at my own rate. Neither are these subjects which a man is not permitted to be ignorant in, or casually and at a venture, to discourse of. I could wish to have a more perfect knowledge of things, but I will not buy it so dear as it costs. My design is to pass over easily, and not laboriously, the remainder of my life; there is nothing that I will cudgel my brains about; no, not even knowledge, of what value soever.

I seek, in the reading of books, only to please myself by an honest diversion; or, if I study, ’tis for no other science than what treats of the knowledge of myself, and instructs me how to die and how to live well.

“My horse must work according to my step.”

I do not bite my nails about the difficulties I meet with in my reading; after a charge or two, I give them over. Should I insist upon them, I should both lose myself and time; for I have an impatient understanding, that must be satisfied at first: what I do not discern at once, is by persistence rendered more obscure. I do nothing without gaiety; continuation and a too obstinate endeavor, darkens, stupefies, and tires my judgment. My sight is confounded and dissipated with poring; I must withdraw it, and refer my discovery to new attempts: just as, to judge rightly of the lustre of scarlet, we are taught to pass the eye lightly over it, and again to run it over at several sudden and reiterated glances. If one book do not please me, I take another; and I never meddle with any, but at such times as I am weary of doing nothing. I care not much for new ones, because the old seem fuller

and stronger; neither do I converse much with Greek authors, because my judgment cannot do its work with imperfect intelligence of the material.

The Quarter Hour of Rabelais. From painting by Tito Conti.

Amongst books that are simply pleasant, of the moderns, Boccaccio’s Decameron, Rabelais, and the Basia of Johannes Secundus (if those may be ranged under the title) are worth reading for amusement. As to the Amadis, and such kinds of writings, they had not the credit of arresting even my childhood. And I will, moreover, say, whether boldly or rashly, that this old, heavy soul of mine is now no longer tickled with Ariosto, no, nor with the worthy Ovid; his facility and inventions, with which I was formerly so ravished, are now of no more relish, and I can hardly have the patience to read them. I speak my opinion freely of all things, even of those that, perhaps, exceed my capacity, and that I do not conceive to be, in any wise, under my jurisdiction. And, accordingly, the judgment I deliver, is to show the measure of my own sight, and not of the things I make so bold to criticise. When I find myself disgusted with Plato’s Axiochus, as with a work, with due respect to such an author be it spoken, without force, my judgment does not believe itself: it is not so arrogant as to oppose the authority of so many other famous judgments of antiquity, which it considers as its tutors and masters, and with whom it is rather content to err; in such a case, it condemns itself either to stop at the outward bark, not being able to penetrate to the heart, or to consider it by some false light. It is

content with only securing itself from trouble and disorder; as to its own weakness, it frankly acknowledges and confesses it. It thinks it gives a just interpretation to the appearances by its conceptions presented to it; but they are weak and imperfect. Most of the fables of Aesop have diverse senses and meanings, of which the mythologists chose some one that quadrates well to the fable; but, for the most part, ’tis but the first face that presents itself and is superficial only; there yet remain others more vivid, essential, and profound, into which they have not been able to penetrate; and just so ’tis with me.

But, to pursue the business of this essay, I have always thought that, in poesy, Virgil, Lucretius, Catullus, and Horace by many degrees excel the rest; and signally, Virgil in his Georgics, which I look upon as the most accomplished piece in poetry; and in comparison of which a man may easily discern that there are some places in his Aeneids, to which the author would have given a little more of the file, had he had leisure: and the fifth book of his Aeneids seems to me the most perfect. I also love Lucan, and willingly read him, not so much for his style, as for his own worth, and the truth and solidity of his opinions and judgments. As for good Terence, the refined elegance and grace of the Latin tongue, I find him admirable in his vivid representation of our manners and the movements of the soul; our actions throw me at every turn upon him; and I cannot read him so often that I do not still discover some new grace and beauty. Such as lived near Virgil’s time complained that some should compare Lucretius to him. I am of opinion that the comparison is, in truth, very unequal: a belief that, nevertheless, I have much ado to assure myself in, when I come upon some excellent passage in Lucretius. But if they were so angry at this comparison, what would they say to the brutish and barbarous stupidity of those who, nowadays, compare him with Ariosto? Would not Ariosto himself say?—

“O stupid and witless age!”

I think the ancients had more reason to be angry with those who compared Plautus with Terence, though much nearer the mark, than Lucretius with Virgil. It makes much for the estimation and preference of Terence, that the father of Roman eloquence has him so often, and alone of his class, in his mouth; and the opinion that the best judge of Roman poets has passed upon his companion. I have often observed that those of our times, who take upon them to write comedies (in imitation of the Italians, who are happy enough in that way of writing), take three or four plots of

those of Plautus or Terence to make one of their own, and crowd five or six of Boccaccio's novels into one single comedy. That which makes them so load themselves with matter is the diffidence they have of being able to support themselves with their own strength. They must find out something to lean to; and not having of their own stuff wherewith to entertain us, they bring in the story to supply the defect of language. It is quite otherwise with my author; the elegance and perfection of his way of speaking makes us lose the appetite of his plot; his refined grace and elegance of diction everywhere occupy us: he is so pleasant throughout,

"Liquid, and likest the pure river,"

and so possesses the soul with his graces that we forget those of his fable. This same consideration carries me further: I observe that the best of the ancient poets have avoided affectation and the hunting after, not only fantastic Spanish and Petrarchic elevations, but even the softer and more gentle touches, which are the ornament of all succeeding poesy. And yet there is no good judgment that will condemn this in the ancients, and that does not incomparably more admire the equal polish, and that perpetual sweetness and flourishing beauty of Catullus's epigrams, than all the stings with which Martial arms the tails of his. This is by the same reason that I gave before, and as Martial says of himself:—

"He had the less for his wit to do that the subject itself supplied what was necessary."

The first, without being moved, or without getting angry, make themselves sufficiently felt; they have matter enough of laughter throughout, they need not tickle themselves; the others have need of foreign assistance; as they have the less wit they must have the more body; they mount on horseback, because they are not able to stand on their own legs. As in our balls, those mean fellows who teach to dance, not being able to represent the presence and dignity of our noblesse, are fain to put themselves forward with dangerous jumping, and other strange motions and tumblers' tricks; and the ladies are less put to it in dances, where there are various coupees, changes, and quick motions of body, than in some other of a more sedate kind, where they are only to move a natural pace, and to represent their ordinary grace and presence. And so I have seen good drolls, when in their own everyday clothes, and with the same face they always wear, give us all the pleasure of their art, when their apprentices, not yet arrived at such a pitch of perfection, are fain to meal their faces, put

themselves into ridiculous disguises, and make a hundred grotesque faces to give us whereat to laugh. This conception of mine is nowhere more demonstrable than in comparing the Aeneid with Orlando Furioso; of which we see the first, by dint of wing, flying in a brave and lofty place, and always following his point: the latter, fluttering and hopping from tale to tale, as from branch to branch, not daring to trust his wings but in very short flights, and perching at every turn, lest his breath and strength should fail: —

"And he attempts short excursions."

These, then, as to this sort of subjects, are the authors that best please me.

As to what concerns my other reading, that mixes a little more profit with the pleasure, and whence I learn how to marshal my opinions and conditions, the books that serve me to this purpose are Plutarch, since he has been translated into French, and Seneca. Both of these have this notable convenience suited to my humor, that the knowledge I there seek is discoursed in loose pieces, that do not require from me any trouble of reading long, of which I am incapable. Such are the minor works of the first and the epistles of the latter, which are the best and most profiting of all their writings. 'Tis no great attempt to take one of them in hand, and I give over at pleasure; for they have no sequence or dependence upon one another. These authors, for the most part, concur in useful and true opinions; and there is this parallel betwixt them, that fortune brought them into the world about the same century: they were both tutors to two Roman emperors: both sought out from foreign countries: both rich and both great men. Their instruction is the cream of philosophy, and delivered after a plain and pertinent manner. Plutarch is more uniform and constant; Seneca more various and waving: the last toiled and bent his whole strength to fortify virtue against weakness, fear, and vicious appetites; the other seems more to slight their power, and to disdain to alter his pace and to stand upon his guard. Plutarch's opinions are Platonic, gentle, and accommodated to civil society; those of the other are Stoical and Epicurean, more remote from the common use, but, in my opinion, more individually commodious and more firm. Seneca seems to lean a little to the tyranny of the emperors of his time, and only seems; for I take it for certain that he speaks against his judgment when he condemns the action of the generous murderers of Caesar. Plutarch is frank throughout: Seneca abounds with brisk touches

and sallies; Plutarch with things that warm and move you more; this contents and pays you better: he guides us, the other pushes us on.

As to Cicero, his works that are most useful to my design are they that treat of manners and rules of our life. But boldly to confess the truth (for since one has passed the barriers of impudence, there is no bridle), his way of writing appears to me negligent and uninviting: for his prefaces, definitions, divisions, and etymologies take up the greatest part of his work: whatever there is of life and marrow is smothered and lost in the long preparation. When I have spent an hour in reading him, which is a great deal for me, and try to recollect what I have thence extracted of juice and substance, for the most part I find nothing but wind; for he is not yet come to the arguments that serve to his purpose, and to the reasons that properly help to form the knot I seek. For me, who only desire to become more wise, not more learned or eloquent, these logical and Aristotelian dispositions of parts are of no use. I would have a man begin with the main proposition. I know well enough what death and pleasure are; let no man give himself the trouble to anatomize them to me. I look for good and solid reasons, at the first dash, to instruct me how to stand their shock, for which purpose neither grammatical subtleties nor the quaint contexture of words and argumentations are of any use at all. I am for discourses that give the first charge into the heart of the redoubt; his languish about the subject; they are proper for the schools, for the bar, and for the pulpit, where we have leisure to nod, and may awake, a quarter of an hour after, time enough to find again the thread of the discourse. It is necessary to speak after this manner to judges, whom a man has a design to gain over, right or wrong, to children and common people, to whom a man must say all, and see what will come of it. I would not have an author make it his business to render me attentive: or that he should cry out fifty times Oyez! as the heralds do. The Romans, in their religious exercises, began with Hoc age: as we in ours do with Sursum corda; these are so many words lost to me: I come already fully prepared from my chamber. I need no allurement, no invitation, no sauce; I eat the meat raw, so that, instead of whetting my appetite by these preparatives, they tire and pall it. Will the license of the time excuse my sacrilegious boldness if I censure the dialogism of Plato himself as also dull and heavy, too much stifling the matter, and lament so much time lost by a man, who had so many better things to say, in so many long and needless preliminary interlocutions. My ignorance will better excuse me in that I

understand not Greek so well as to discern the beauty of his language. I generally choose books that use sciences, not such as only lead to them. The two first, and Pliny, and their like, have nothing of this Hoc age; they will have to do with men already instructed; or if they have, ’tis a substantial Hoc age; and that has a body by itself. I also delight in reading the Epistles to Atticus, not only because they contain a great deal of the history and affairs of his time, but much more because I therein discover much of his own private humors; for I have a singular curiosity, as I have said elsewhere, to pry into the souls and the natural and true opinions of the authors, with whom I converse. A man may indeed judge of their parts, but not of their manners nor of themselves, by the writings they exhibit upon the theatre of the world. I have a thousand times lamented the loss of the treatise Brutus wrote upon Virtue, for it is well to learn the theory from those who best know the practice. But seeing the matter preached and the preacher are different things, I would as willingly see Brutus in Plutarch, as in a book of his own. I would rather choose to be certainly informed of the conference he had in his tent with some particular friends of his the night before a battle, than of the harangue he made the next day to his army; and of what he did in his closet and his chamber, than what he did in the public square and in the senate. As to Cicero, I am of the common opinion that, learning excepted, he had no great natural excellence. He was a good citizen, of an affable nature, as all fat, heavy men, such as he was, usually are; but given to ease, and had, in truth, a mighty share of vanity and ambition. Neither do I know how to excuse him for thinking his poetry fit to be published; ’tis no great imperfection to make ill verses, but it is an imperfection not to be able to judge how unworthy his verses were of the glory of his name. For what concerns his eloquence, that is totally out of all comparison, and I believe it will never be equalled. The younger Cicero, who resembled his father in nothing but in name, whilst commanding in Asia, had several strangers one day at his table, and, amongst the rest, Cestius seated at the lower end, as men often intrude to the open tables of the great. Cicero asked one of his people who that man was, who presently told him his name; but he, as one who had his thoughts taken up with something else, and who had forgotten the answer made him, asking three or four times, over and over again, the same question, the fellow, to deliver himself from so many answers and to make him know him by some particular circumstance; “ ’tis that Cestius,” said he, “of whom it was told

you, that he makes no great account of your father’s eloquence in comparison of his own.” At which Cicero, being suddenly nettled, commanded poor Cestius presently to be seized, and caused him to be very well whipped in his own presence; a very discourteous entertainer! Yet even amongst those, who, all things considered, have reputed his eloquence incomparable, there have been some, who have not stuck to observe some faults in it: as that great Brutus his friend, for example, who said ’twas a broken and feeble eloquence, fractam et elumbem. The orators also, nearest to the age wherein he lived, reprehended in him the care he had of a certain long cadence in his periods, and particularly took notice of these words, esse videatur, which he there so often makes use of. For my part, I more approve of a shorter style, and that comes more roundly off. He does, though, sometimes shuffle his parts more briskly together, but ’tis very seldom. I have myself taken notice of this one passage:—

“I had rather be old a brief time, than be old before old age.”

The historians are my right ball, for they are pleasant and easy, and where man in general, the knowledge of whom I hunt after, appears more vividly and entire than anywhere else: the variety and truth of his internal qualities, in gross and piecemeal, the diversity of means by which he is united and knit, and the accidents that threaten him. Now those that write lives, by reason they insist more upon counsels than events, more upon what sallies from within, than upon what happens without, are the most proper for my reading; and, therefore, above all others, Plutarch is the man for me. I am very sorry we have not a dozen Laertii, or that he was not further extended; for I am equally curious to know the lives and fortunes of these great instructors of the world, as to know the diversities of their doctrines and opinions. In this kind of study of histories, a man must tumble over, without distinction, all sorts of authors, old and new, French or foreign, there to know the things of which they variously treat. But Caesar, in my opinion, particularly deserves to be studied, not for the knowledge of the history only, but for himself, so great an excellence and perfection he has above all the rest, though Sallust be one of the number. In earnest, I read this author with more reverence and respect than is usually allowed to human writings; one while considering him in his person, by his actions and miraculous greatness, and another in the purity and inimitable polish of his language, wherein he not only excels all other historians, as Cicero confesses, but, peradventure, even Cicero himself; speaking of his enemies

with so much sincerity in his judgment, that, the false colors with which he strives to palliate his evil cause, and the ordure of his pestilent ambition excepted, I think there is no fault to be objected against him, saving this, that he speaks too sparingly of himself, seeing so many great things could not have been performed under his conduct, but that his own personal acts must necessarily have had a greater share in them than he attributes to them.

I love historians, whether of the simple sort, or of the higher order. The simple, who have nothing of their own to mix with it, and who only make it their business to collect all that comes to their knowledge, and faithfully to record all things, without choice or discrimination, leave to us the entire judgment of discerning the truth. Such, for example, amongst others, is honest Froissart, who has proceeded in his undertaking with so frank a plainness that, having committed an error, he is not ashamed to confess and correct it in the place where the finger has been laid, and who represents to us even the variety of rumors that were then spread abroad, and the different reports that were made to him; ’tis the naked and inform matter of history, and of which every one may make his profit, according to his understanding. The more excellent sort of historians have judgment to pick out what is most worthy to be known; and, of two reports, to examine which is the most likely to be true: from the condition of princes and their humors, they conclude their counsels, and attribute to them words proper for the occasion; such have title to assume the authority of regulating our belief to what they themselves believe; but certainly, this privilege belongs to very few. For the middle sort of historians, of which the most part are, they spoil all; they will chew our meat for us; they take upon them to judge of, and consequently, to incline the history to their own fancy; for if the judgment lean to one side, a man cannot avoid wresting and writhing his narrative to that bias; they undertake to select things worthy to be known, and yet often conceal from us such a word, such a private action, as would much better instruct us; omit, as incredible, such things as they do not understand, and peradventure some, because they cannot express them well in good French or Latin. Let them display their eloquence and intelligence, and judge according to their own fancy: but let them, withal, leave us something to judge of after them, and neither alter nor disguise, by their abridgments and at their own choice, anything of the substance of the matter, but deliver it to us pure and entire in all its dimensions.

For the most part, and especially in these latter ages, persons are culled out for this work from amongst the common people, upon the sole consideration of well-speaking, as if we were to learn grammar from them; and the men so chosen have fair reason, being hired for no other end and pretending to nothing but babble, not to be very solicitous of any part but that, and so, with a fine jingle of words, prepare us a pretty contexture of reports they pick up in the streets. The only good histories are those that have been written by the persons themselves who held command in the affairs whereof they write, or who participated in the conduct of them, or, at least, who have had the conduct of others of the same nature. Such are almost all the Greek and Roman histories: for, several eyewitnesses having written of the same subject, in the time when grandeur and learning commonly met in the same person, if there happen to be an error, it must of necessity be a very slight one, and upon a very doubtful incident. What can a man expect from a physician who writes of war, or from a mere scholar, treating of the designs of princes? If we could take notice how scrupulous the Romans were in this, there would need but this example: Asinius Pollio found in the histories of Caesar himself something misreported, a mistake occasioned, either by reason he could not have his eye in all parts of his army at once and had given credit to some individual persons who had not delivered him a very true account; or else, for not having had too perfect notice given him by his lieutenants of what they had done in his absence. By which we may see, whether the inquisition after truth be not very delicate, when a man cannot believe the report of a battle from the knowledge of him who there commanded, nor from the soldiers who were engaged in it, unless, after the method of a judicial inquiry, the witnesses be confronted and objections considered upon the proof of the least detail of every incident. In good earnest, the knowledge we have of our own affairs, is much more obscure: but that has been sufficiently handled by Bodin, and according to my own sentiment. A little to aid the weakness of my memory (so extreme that it has happened to me more than once, to take books again into my hand as new and unseen, that I had carefully read over a few years before, and scribbled with my notes) I have adopted a custom of late, to note at the end of every book (that is, of those I never intend to read again) the time when I made an end on’t, and the judgment I had made of it, to the end that this might, at least, represent to me the character and general idea I had conceived of the author in reading it; and I will here transcribe some of

those annotations. I wrote this, some ten years ago, in my Guicciardini (of what language soever my books speak to me in, I always speak to them in my own): “He is a diligent historiographer, from whom, in my opinion, a man may learn the truth of the affairs of his time, as exactly as from any other; in the most of which he was himself also a personal actor, and in honorable command. There is no appearance that he disguised anything, either upon the account of hatred, favor, or vanity; of which the free censures he passes upon the great ones, and particularly those by whom he was advanced and employed in commands of great trust and honor, as Pope Clement VII., give ample testimony. As to that part which he thinks himself the best at, namely, his digressions and discourses, he has indeed some very good, and enriched with fine features; but he is too fond of them: for, to leave nothing unsaid, having a subject so full, ample, almost infinite, he degenerates into pedantry and smacks a little of scholastic prattle. I have also observed this in him, that of so many souls and so many effects, so many motives and so many counsels as he judges, he never attributes any one to virtue, religion, or conscience, as if all these were utterly extinct in the world: and of all the actions, how brave soever in outward show they appear in themselves, he always refers the cause and motive to some vicious occasion or some prospect of profit. It is impossible to imagine but that, amongst such an infinite number of actions as he makes mention of, there must be some one produced by the way of honest reason. No corruption could so universally have infected men that some one would not escape the contagion: which makes me suspect that his own taste was vicious, whence it might happen that he judged other men by himself.”

In my Philip de Commines there is this written: “You will here find the language sweet and delightful, of a natural simplicity, the narration pure, with the good faith of the author conspicuous therein; free from vanity, when speaking of himself, and from affection or envy, when speaking of others: his discourses and exhortations rather accompanied with zeal and truth, than with any exquisite sufficiency; and, throughout, authority and gravity, which bespeak him a man of good extraction, and brought up in great affairs.”

Upon the Memoirs of Monsieur du Bellay I find this: “ ’Tis always pleasant to read things written by those that have experienced how they ought to be carried on; but withal, it cannot be denied but there is a manifest decadence in these two lords from the freedom and liberty of writing that

shine in the elder historians, such as the Sire de Joinville, the familiar companion of St. Louis; Eginhard, chancellor to Charlemagne; and of later date, Philip de Commines. What we have here is rather an apology for King Francis, against the Emperor Charles V., than history. I will not believe that they have falsified anything, as to matter of fact; but they make a common practice of twisting the judgment of events, very often contrary to reason, to our advantage, and of omitting whatsoever is ticklish to be handled in the life of their master; witness the proceedings of Messieurs de Montmorency and de Biron, which are here omitted: nay, so much as the very name of Madame d'Estampes is not here to be found. Secret actions an historian may conceal; but to pass over in silence what all the world knows and things that have drawn after them public and such high consequences, is an inexcusable defect. In fine, whoever has a mind to have a perfect knowledge of King Francis and the events of his reign, let him seek it elsewhere, if my advice may prevail. The only profit a man can reap from these Memoirs is in the special narrative of battles and other exploits of war wherein these gentlemen were personally engaged; in some words and private actions of the princes of their time, and in the treaties and negotiations carried on by the Seigneur de Langey, where there are everywhere things worthy to be known, and discourses above the vulgar strain."

OF CRUELTY

IT SEEMS to me that virtue is another and nobler thing than the disposition to good which is innate in us. Well-regulated and well-born souls pursue, indeed, the same methods, and represent in their actions the same face that virtue itself does: but the word virtue imports, I know not what, more great and active than merely for a man to suffer himself, by a happy disposition, to be gently and quietly drawn to the rule of reason. He who, by a natural sweetness and facility, should despise injuries received, would doubtless do a very fine and laudable thing; but he who, provoked and nettled to the quick by an offence, should fortify himself with the arms of reason against the furious appetite of revenge, and after a great conflict, master his own passion, would certainly do a great deal more. The first would do well; the latter virtuously: one action might be called goodness, and the other virtue; for methinks, the very name of virtue presupposes difficulty and contention, and cannot be exercised without an opponent. 'Tis for this reason, perhaps, that we call God good, mighty, liberal and just; but we do not call Him virtuous, being that all His operations are natural and without endeavor. It has been the opinion of many philosophers, not only Stoics, but Epicureans—and this addition I borrow from the vulgar opinion, which is false, notwithstanding the witty conceit of Arcesilaus in answer to one, who, being reproached that many scholars went from his school to the Epicurean, but never any from thence to his school, said in answer, "I believe it indeed; numbers of capons being made out of cocks, but never any cocks out of capons." For, in truth, the Epicurean sect is not at all inferior to the Stoic in steadiness, and the rigor of opinions and precepts. And a certain Stoic, showing more honesty than those disputants, who, in order to quarrel with Epicurus, and to throw the game into their hands, make him say what he never thought, putting a wrong construction upon his words, clothing his sentences, by the strict rules of grammar, with another meaning, and a different opinion from that which they knew he entertained in his mind and in his morals, the Stoic, I say, declared that he abandoned the Epicurean sect, upon this among other considerations, that he thought their road too lofty and inaccessible:—

> *"And those are called lovers of pleasure, being in effect lovers of honor and justice, who cultivate and observe all the virtues."*

These philosophers say that it is not enough to have the soul seated in a good place, of a good temper, and well disposed to virtue; it is not enough to have our resolutions and our reasoning fixed above all the power of fortune, but that we are, moreover, to seek occasions wherein to put them to the proof: they would seek pain, necessity, and contempt to contend with them and to keep the soul in breath:—

"Virtue attacked adds to its own force."

'Tis one of the reasons why Epaminondas, who was yet of a third sect, refused the riches fortune presented to him by very lawful means; because, said he, I am to contend with poverty, in which extreme he maintained himself to the last. Socrates put himself, methinks, upon a ruder trial, keeping for his exercise a confounded scolding wife, which was fighting at sharps. Metellus having, of all the Roman senators, alone attempted, by the power of virtue, to withstand the violence of Saturninus, tribune of the people at Rome, who would, by all means, cause an unjust law to pass in favor of the commons, and, by so doing, having incurred the capital penalties that Saturninus had established against the dissentient, entertained those who, in this extremity, led him to execution with words to this effect: That it was a thing too easy and too base to do ill; and that to do well where there was no danger was a common thing; but that to do well where there was danger was the proper office of a man of virtue. These words of Metellus very clearly represent to us what I would make out, viz., that virtue refuses facility for a companion; and that the easy, smooth, and descending way by which the regular steps of a sweet disposition of nature are conducted is not that of a true virtue; she requires a rough and stormy passage; she will have either exotic difficulties to wrestle with, like that of Metellus, by means whereof fortune delights to interrupt the speed of her career, or internal difficulties, that the inordinate appetites and imperfections of our condition introduce to disturb her.

I am come thus far at my ease; but here it comes into my head that the soul of Socrates, the most perfect that ever came to my knowledge, should by this rule be of very little recommendation; for I cannot conceive in that person any the least motion of a vicious inclination: I cannot imagine there could be any difficulty or constraint in the course of his virtue: I know his reason to be so powerful and sovereign over him that she would never have suffered a vicious appetite so much as to spring in him. To a virtue so elevated as his, I have nothing to oppose. Methinks I see him march, with a

victorious and triumphant pace, in pomp and at his ease, without opposition or disturbance. If virtue cannot shine bright, but by the conflict of contrary appetites, shall we then say that she cannot subsist without the assistance of vice, and that it is from her that she derives her reputation and honor? What then, also, would become of that brave and generous Epicurean pleasure, which makes account that it nourishes virtue tenderly in her lap, and there makes it play and wanton, giving it for toys to play withal, shame, fevers, poverty, death, and torments? If I presuppose that a perfect virtue manifests itself in contending, in patient enduring of pain, and undergoing the uttermost extremity of the gout, without being moved in her seat; if I give her troubles and difficulty for her necessary objects: what will become of a virtue elevated to such a degree, as not only to despise pain, but, moreover, to rejoice in it, and to be tickled with the throes of a sharp colic, such as the Epicureans have established, and of which many of them, by their actions, have given most manifest proofs? As have several others, who I find to have surpassed in effects even the very rules of their discipline. Witness the younger Cato: When I see him die, and tearing out his own bowels, I am not satisfied simply to believe that he had then his soul totally exempt from all trouble and horror: I cannot think that he only maintained himself in the steadiness that the Stoical rules prescribed him; temperate, without emotion, and imperturbed. There was, methinks, something in the virtue of this man too sprightly and fresh to stop there; I believe that, without doubt, he felt a pleasure and delight in so noble an action, and was more pleased in it than in any other of his life:—

> *"So he quitted life; he rejoiced that a reason for dying had arisen."*

I believe it so thoroughly that I question whether he would have been content to have been deprived of the occasion of so brave an exploit; and if the goodness that made him embrace the public concern more than his own, withheld me not, I should easily fall into an opinion that he thought himself obliged to fortune for having put his virtue upon so brave a trial, and for having favored that brigand in treading underfoot the ancient liberty of his country. Methinks I read in this action I know not what gratification in his soul, and an extraordinary emotion of pleasure, when he looked upon the generosity and height of his enterprise:—

> "*The more courageous from the deliberation to die,*"

not stimulated with any hope of glory, as the popular and effeminate judgments of some have concluded (for that consideration was too mean and low to possess so generous, so haughty, and so determined a heart as his), but for the very beauty of the thing in itself, which he who had the handling of the springs discerned more clearly and in its perfection than we are able to do. Philosophy has obliged me in determining that so brave an action had been indecently placed in any other life than that of Cato; and that it only appertained to his to end so; notwithstanding, and according to reason, he commanded his son and the senators who accompanied him to take another course in their affairs:—

> *"Cato, whom nature had given incredible dignity, which he had fortified by perpetual constancy, ever remaining of his predetermined opinion, preferred to die rather than to look on the countenance of a tyrant."*

Every death ought to hold proportion with the life before it; we do not become others for dying. I always interpret the death by the life preceding; and if any one tell me of a death strong and constant in appearance, annexed to a feeble life, I conclude it produced by some feeble cause, and suitable to the life before. The easiness then of his death and the facility of dying he had acquired by the vigor of his soul; shall we say that it ought to abate anything of the lustre of his virtue? And who, that has his brain never so little tinctured with the true philosophy, can be content to imagine Socrates only free from fear and passion in the accident of his prison, fetters, and condemnation? and that will not discover in him not only firmness and constancy (which was his ordinary condition), but, moreover, I know not what new satisfaction, and a frolic cheerfulness in his last words and actions? In the start he gave with the pleasure of scratching his leg when his irons were taken off, does he not discover an equal serenity and joy in his soul for being freed from past inconveniences, and at the same time to enter into the knowledge of the things to come? Cato shall pardon me, if he please; his death indeed is more tragical and more lingering; but yet this is, I know not how, methinks, finer. Aristippus, to one that was lamenting this death: "The gods grant me such an one," said he. A man discerns in the soul of these two great men and their imitators (for I very much doubt whether there were ever their equals) so perfect a habitude to virtue, that it was turned to a complexion. It is no longer a laborious virtue, nor the precepts of reason, to maintain which the soul is so racked, but the very essence of

their soul, its natural and ordinary habit; they have rendered it such by a long practice of philosophical precepts having lit upon a rich and fine nature; the vicious passions that spring in us can find no entrance into them; the force and vigor of their soul stifle and extinguish irregular desires, so soon as they begin to move.

Temptation. From painting by Eduardo Gelli.

Now, that it is not more noble, by a high and divine resolution, to hinder the birth of temptations, and to be so formed to virtue, that the very seeds of vice are rooted out, than to hinder by main force their progress; and, having suffered ourselves to be surprised with the first motions of the passions, to arm ourselves and to stand firm to oppose their progress, and overcome them; and that this second effect is not also much more generous than to be simply endowed with a facile and affable nature, of itself disaffected to debauchery and vice, I do not think can be doubted; for this third and last sort of virtue seems to render a man innocent, but not virtuous; free from doing ill, but not apt enough to do well: considering also, that this condition is so near neighbor to imperfection and cowardice, that I know not very well how to separate the confines and distinguish them: the very names of goodness and innocence are, for this reason, in some sort grown into contempt. I very well know that several virtues, as chastity, sobriety, and temperance, may come to a man through personal defects. Constancy in danger, if it must be so called, the contempt of death,

and patience in misfortunes, may ofttimes be found in men for want of well judging of such accidents, and not apprehending them for such as they are. Want of apprehension and stupidity sometimes counterfeit virtuous effects: as I have often seen it happen, that men have been commended for what really merited blame. An Italian lord once said this, in my presence, to the disadvantage of his own nation: that the subtlety of the Italians, and the vivacity of their conceptions were so great, and they foresaw the dangers and accidents that might befall them so far off, that it was not to be thought strange, if they were often, in war, observed to provide for their safety, even before they had discovered the peril; that we French and the Spaniards, who were not so cunning, went on further, and that we must be made to see and feel the danger before we would take the alarms, but that even then we could not stick to it. But the Germans and Swiss, more gross and heavy, had not the sense to look about them, even when the blows were falling about their ears. Peradventure, he only talked so for mirth's sake; and yet it is most certain that in war raw soldiers rush into dangers with more precipitancy than after they have been scalded:—

> *"Not ignorant how much power the fresh glory of arms and sweetest honor possess in the first contest."*

For this reason it is that, when we judge of a particular action, we are to consider the circumstances, and the whole man by whom it is performed, before we give it a name.

To instance in myself: I have sometimes known my friends call that prudence in me, which was merely fortune; and repute that courage and patience, which was judgment and opinion; and attribute to me one title for another, sometimes to my advantage and sometimes otherwise. As to the rest, I am so far from being arrived at the first and most perfect degree of excellence, where virtue is turned into habit, that even of the second I have made no great proofs. I have not been very solicitous to curb the desires by which I have been importuned. My virtue is a virtue, or rather an innocence, casual and accidental. If I had been born of a more irregular complexion, I am afraid I should have made scurvy work; for I never observed any great stability in my soul to resist passions, if they were never so little vehement: I know not how to nourish quarrels and debates in my own bosom, and, consequently, owe myself no great thanks that I am free from several vices: —

"If my nature be disfigured only with slight and few vices, and is otherwise just, it is as if you should blame moles on a fair body."

I owe it rather to my fortune than my reason. She has caused me to be descended of a race famous for integrity and of a very good father; I know not whether or no he has infused into me part of his humors, or whether domestic examples and the good education of my infancy have insensibly assisted in the work, or, if I was otherwise born so:—

"Whether the Balance or dread Scorpio, more potent over my natal hour, aspects me, or Capricorn, supreme over the Hesperian sea;"

but so it is, that I have naturally a horror for most vices. The answer of Antisthenes to him who asked him, which was the best apprenticeship "to unlearn evil," seems to point at this. I have them in horror, I say, with a detestation so natural, and so much my own, that the same instinct and impression I brought of them with me from my nurse, I yet retain, and no temptation whatever has had the power to make me alter it. Not so much as my own discourses, which in some things lashing out of the common road might seem easily to license me to actions that my natural inclination makes me hate. I will say a prodigious thing, but I will say it, however: I find myself in many things more under reputation by my manners than by my opinion, and my concupiscence less debauched than my reason. Aristippus instituted opinions so bold in favor of pleasure and riches as set all the philosophers against him: but as to his manners, Dionysius the tyrant, having presented three beautiful women before him, to take his choice; he made answer, that he would choose them all, and that Paris got himself into trouble for having preferred one before the other two: but, having taken them home to his house, he sent them back untouched. His servant finding himself overladen upon the way, with the money he carried after him, he ordered him to pour out and throw away that which troubled him. And Epicurus, whose doctrines were so irreligious and effeminate, was in his life very laborious and devout; he wrote to a friend of his that he lived only upon biscuit and water, entreating him to send him a little cheese, to lie by him against he had a mind to make a feast. Must it be true, that to be a perfect good man, we must be so by an occult, natural, and universal propriety, without law, reason, or example? The debauches wherein I have been engaged, have not been, I thank God, of the worst sort, and I have condemned them in myself, for my judgment was never infected by them;

on the contrary, I accuse them more severely in myself than in any other; but that is all, for, as to the rest, I oppose too little resistance and suffer myself to incline too much to the other side of the balance, excepting that I moderate them, and prevent them from mixing with other vices, which for the most part will cling together, if a man have not a care. I have contracted and curtailed mine, to make them as single and as simple as I can:—

"Nor do I cherish error further."

For as to the opinion of the Stoics, who say, "That the wise man when he works, works by all the virtues together, though one be most apparent, according to the nature of the action;" and herein the similitude of a human body might serve them somewhat, for the action of anger cannot work, unless all the humors assist it, though choler predominate;—if they will thence draw a like consequence, that when the wicked man does wickedly, he does it by all the vices together, I do not believe it to be so, or else I understand them not, for I by effect find the contrary. These are sharp, unsubstantial subtleties, with which philosophy sometimes amuses itself. I follow some vices, but I fly others as much as a saint would do. The Peripatetics also disown this indissoluble connection; and Aristotle is of opinion that a prudent and just man may be intemperate and inconsistent. Socrates confessed to some who had discovered a certain inclination to vice in his physiognomy, that it was, in truth, his natural propension, but that he had by discipline corrected it. And such as were familiar with the philosopher Stilpo said, that being born with addiction to wine and women, he had by study rendered himself very abstinent both from the one and the other.

What I have in me of good, I have, quite contrary, by the chance of my birth; and hold it not either by law, precept, or any other instruction; the innocence that is in me is a simple one; little vigor and no art. Amongst other vices, I mortally hate cruelty, both by nature and judgment, as the very extreme of all vices: nay, with so much tenderness that I cannot see a chicken's neck pulled off without trouble, and cannot without impatience endure the cry of a hare in my dog's teeth, though the chase be a violent pleasure. Such as have sensuality to encounter, freely make use of this argument, to show that it is altogether "vicious and unreasonable; that when it is at the height, it masters us to that degree that a man's reason can have no access," and instance our own experience in the act of love,

“Quum jam praesagit gaudia corpus, Atque in eo est Venus, ut muliebria conserat arva,”

wherein they conceive that the pleasure so transports us, that our reason cannot perform its office, whilst we are in such ecstasy and rapture. I know very well it may be otherwise, and that a man may sometimes, if he will, gain this point over himself to sway his soul, even in the critical moment, to think of something else; but then he must ply it to that bent. I know that a man may triumph over the utmost effort of this pleasure: I have experienced it in myself, and have not found Venus so imperious a goddess, as many, and much more virtuous men than I, declare. I do not consider it a miracle, as the Queen of Navarre does in one of the Tales of her Heptameron (which is a delicate book of its kind), nor for a thing of extreme difficulty, to pass whole nights, where a man has all the convenience and liberty he can desire, with a long-coveted mistress, and yet be true to the pledge first given to satisfy himself with kisses and such-like endearments, without pressing any further. I conceive that the example of the pleasure of the chase would be more proper; wherein though the pleasure be less, there is the higher excitement of unexpected joy, giving no time for the reason, taken by surprise, to prepare itself for the encounter, when after a long quest the beast starts up on a sudden in a place where, peradventure, we least expected it; the shock and the ardor of the shouts and cries of the hunters so strike us, that it would be hard for those who love this lesser chase, to turn their thoughts upon the instant another way; and the poets make Diana triumph over the torch and shafts of Cupid:—

“Who does not forget these evils amid the care of love?”

To return to what I was saying before, I am tenderly compassionate of others’ afflictions, and should readily cry for company, if, upon any occasion whatever, I could cry at all. Nothing tempts my tears but tears, and not only those that are real and true, but whatever they are, feigned or painted. I do not much lament the dead, and should envy them rather; but I very much lament the dying. The savages do not so much offend me, in roasting and eating the bodies of the dead, as they do who torment and persecute the living. Nay, I cannot look so much as upon the ordinary executions of justice, how reasonable soever, with a steady eye. Some one having to give testimony of Julius Caesar’s clemency; “he was,” says he, “mild in his revenges. Having compelled the pirates to yield by whom he had before been taken prisoner and put to ransom; forasmuch as he had

threatened them with the cross, he indeed condemned them to it, but it was after they had been first strangled. He punished his secretary Philemon, who had attempted to poison him, with no greater severity than mere death." Without naming that Latin author, who thus dares to allege as a testimony of mercy the killing only of those by whom we have been offended, it is easy to guess that he was struck with the horrid and inhuman examples of cruelty practised by the Roman tyrants.

For my part, even in justice itself, all that exceeds a simple death appears to me pure cruelty; especially in us who ought, having regard to their souls, to dismiss them in a good and calm condition; which cannot be, when we have agitated them by insufferable torments. Not long since, a soldier who was a prisoner, perceiving from a tower where he was shut up, that the people began to assemble to the place of execution, and that the carpenters were busy erecting a scaffold, he presently concluded that the preparation was for him, and therefore entered into a resolution to kill himself, but could find no instrument to assist him in his design except an old rusty cart-nail that fortune presented to him; with this he first gave himself two great wounds about his throat, but finding these would not do, he presently afterwards gave himself a third in the belly, where he left the nail sticking up to the head. The first of his keepers who came in found him in this condition: yet alive, but sunk down and exhausted by his wounds. To make use of time, therefore, before he should die, they made haste to read his sentence; which having done, and he hearing that he was only condemned to be beheaded, he seemed to take new courage, accepted wine which he had before refused, and thanked his judges for the unhoped-for mildness of their sentence; saying, that he had taken a resolution to despatch himself for fear of a more severe and insupportable death, having entertained an opinion, by the preparations he had seen in the place, that they were resolved to torment him with some horrible execution, and seemed to be delivered from death in having it changed from what he apprehended.

I should advise that those examples of severity by which 'tis designed to retain the people in their duty, might be exercised upon the dead bodies of criminals; for to see them deprived of sepulture, to see them boiled and divided into quarters, would almost work as much upon the vulgar, as the pain they make the living endure; though that in effect be little or nothing, as God himself says, "Who kill the body, and after that have no more that

they can do;" and the poets singularly dwell upon the horrors of this picture, as something worse than death:—

"Alas! that the half-burnt remains of the king, exposing his bones, should be foully dragged along the ground besmeared with gore."

I happened to come by one day accidentally at Rome, just as they were upon executing Catena, a notorious robber: he was strangled without any emotion of the spectators, but when they came to cut him in quarters, the hangman gave not a blow that the people did not follow with a doleful cry and exclamation, as if every one had lent his sense of feeling to the miserable carcass. Those inhuman excesses ought to be exercised upon the bark, and not upon the quick. Artaxerxes, in almost a like case, moderated the severity of the ancient laws of Persia, ordaining that the nobility who had committed a fault, instead of being whipped, as they were used to be, should be stripped only and their clothes whipped for them; and that whereas they were wont to tear off their hair, they should only take off their high-crowned tiara. The so devout Egyptians thought they sufficiently satisfied the divine justice by sacrificing hogs in effigy and representation; a bold invention to pay God so essential a substance in picture only and in show.

I live in a time wherein we abound in incredible examples of this vice, through the license of our civil wars; and we see nothing in ancient histories more extreme than what we have proof of every day, but I cannot, any the more, get used to it. I could hardly persuade myself, before I saw it with my eyes, that there could be found souls so cruel and fell, who, for the sole pleasure of murder, would commit it; would hack and lop off the limbs of others; sharpen their wits to invent unusual torments and new kinds of death, without hatred, without profit, and for no other end but only to enjoy the pleasant spectacle of the gestures and motions, the lamentable groans and cries of a man dying in anguish. For this is the utmost point to which cruelty can arrive:—

"That a man should kill a man, not being angry, not in fear, only for the sake of the spectacle."

For my own part, I cannot without grief see so much as an innocent beast pursued and killed that has no defence, and from which we have received no offence at all; and that which frequently happens, that the sag we hunt, finding himself weak and out of breath, and seeing no other

remedy, surrenders himself to us who pursue him, imploring mercy by his tears:—

"Who, bleeding, by his tears seems to crave mercy,"

has ever been to me a very unpleasing sight; and I hardly ever take a beast alive that I do not presently turn out again. Pythagoras bought them of fishermen and fowlers to do the same:—

"I think 'twas slaughter of wild beasts that first stained the steel of man with blood."

Those natures that are sanguinary towards beasts discover a natural proneness to cruelty. After they had accustomed themselves at Rome to spectacles of the slaughter of animals, they proceeded to those of the slaughter of men, of gladiators. Nature has herself, I fear, imprinted in man a kind of instinct to inhumanity; nobody takes pleasure in seeing beasts play with and caress one another, but every one is delighted with seeing them dismember, and tear one another to pieces. And that I may not be laughed at for the sympathy I have with them, theology itself enjoins us some favor in their behalf; and considering that one and the same master has lodged us together in this palace for his service, and that they, as well as we, are of his family, it has reason to enjoin us some affection and regard to them. Pythagoras borrowed the metempsychosis from the Egyptians, but it has since been received by several nations, and particularly by our Druids:—

"Souls never die, but, having left their former seat, live and are received into new homes."

The religion of our ancient Gauls maintained that souls, being eternal, never ceased to remove and shift their places from one body to another; mixing moreover with this fancy some consideration of divine justice; for according to the deportments of the soul, whilst it had been in Alexander, they said that God assigned it another body to inhabit, more or less painful, and proper for its condition:—

"He makes them wear the silent chains of brutes, the bloodthirsty souls he encloses in bears, the thieves in wolves, the deceivers in foxes; where, after successive years and a thousand forms, man had spent his life, and after purgation in Lethe's flood, at last he restores them to the primordial human shapes."

If it had been valiant, he lodged it in the body of a lion; if voluptuous, in that of a hog; if timorous, in that of a hart or hare; if malicious, in that of

a fox, and so of the rest, till having purified it by this chastisement, it again entered into the body of some other man:—

"For I myself remember that, in the days of the Trojan war, I was Euphorbus, son of Pantheus."

As to the relationship betwixt us and beasts, I do not much admit of it; nor of that which several nations, and those among the most ancient and most noble, have practised, who have not only received brutes into their society and companionship, but have given them a rank infinitely above themselves, esteeming them one while familiars and favorites of the gods, and having them in more than human reverence and respect; others acknowledged no other god or divinity than they:—

"Beasts, out of opinion of some benefit received by them, were consecrated by barbarians."

"This place adores the crocodile; another dreads the ibis, feeder on serpents; here shines the golden image of the sacred ape; here men venerate the fish of the river; there whole towns worship a dog."

And the very interpretation that Plutarch gives to this error, which is very well conceived, is advantageous to them: for he says that it was not the cat or the ox, for example, that the Egyptians adored: but that they, in those beasts, adored some image of the divine faculties; in this, patience and utility: in that, vivacity, or, as with our neighbors the Burgundians and all the Germans, impatient to see themselves shut up; by which they represented liberty, which they loved and adored above all other godlike attributes, and so of the rest. But when, amongst the more moderate opinions, I meet with arguments that endeavor to demonstrate the near resemblance betwixt us and animals, how large a share they have in our greatest privileges, and with how much probability they compare us together, truly I abate a great deal of our presumption, and willingly resign that imaginary sovereignty that is attributed to us over other creatures.

But supposing all this were not true, there is nevertheless a certain respect, a general duty of humanity, not only to beasts that have life and sense, but even to trees and plants. We owe justice to men, and graciousness and benignity to other creatures that are capable of it; there is a certain commerce and mutual obligation betwixt them and us. Nor shall I be afraid to confess the tenderness of my nature so childish, that I cannot well refuse to play with my dog, when he the most unseasonably importunes me so to do. The Turks have alms and hospitals for beasts. The Romans had public

care to the nourishment of geese, by whose vigilance their Capitol had been preserved. The Athenians made a decree that the mules and moyls which had served at the building of the temple called Hecatompedon should be free and suffered to pasture at their own choice, without hindrance. The Agrigentines had a common use solemnly to inter the beasts they had a kindness for, as horses of some rare quality, dogs, and useful birds, and even those that had only been kept to divert their children; and the magnificence that was ordinary with them in all other things, also particularly appeared in the sumptuosity and number of monuments erected to this end, and which remained in their beauty several ages after. The Egyptians buried wolves, bears, crocodiles, dogs, and cats in sacred places, embalmed their bodies, and put on mourning at their death. Cimon gave an honorable sepulture to the mares with which he had three times gained the prize of the course at the Olympic Games. The ancient Xantippus caused his dog to be interred on an eminence near the sea, which has ever since retained the name, and Plutarch says, that he had a scruple about selling for a small profit to the slaughterer an ox that had been long in his service.

APOLOGY OF RAIMOND DE SEBONDE

LEARNING IS, in truth, a very useful and a very considerable quality; such as despise it merely discover their own folly: but yet I do not prize it at the excessive rate some others do; as Herillus the philosopher for one, who therein places the sovereign good, and maintained that it was merely in her to render us wise and contented, which I do not believe; no more than I do what others have said, that learning is the mother of all virtue, and that all vice proceeds from ignorance. If this be true, it is subject to a very long interpretation. My house has long been open to men of knowledge and is very well known to them; for my father, who governed it fifty years and more, inflamed with the new ardor with which King Francis embraced letters and brought them into esteem, with great diligence and expense hunted after the acquaintance of learned men, receiving them at his house as persons sacred, and who had some particular inspiration of divine wisdom; collecting their sayings and sentences as so many oracles, and with so much the greater reverence and religion, as he was the less able to judge; for he had no knowledge of letters, no more than his predecessors. For my part I love them well; but I do not adore them. Amongst the rest, Peter Bunel, a man of great reputation for knowledge in his time, having, with others of his sort, stayed some days at Montaigne in my father's company, he presented him at his departure with a book entitled "Thelogia naturalis: sive Liber creaturarum magistri Raimondi de Sebonde;" and knowing that the Italian and Spanish tongues were familiar to my father, and this book being written in Spanish capped with Latin terminations, he hoped that with little help he might be able to make it turn to account, and therefore recommended it to him as a very useful piece and proper for the time wherein he gave it to him, which was when the novel doctrines of Martin Luther began to be in vogue, and in many places to stagger our ancient belief: wherein he was very well advised, justly, in his own reason, foreseeing that the beginning of this distemper would easily run into an execrable atheism; for the vulgar not having the faculty of judging of things themselves, suffering themselves to be carried away by fortune and appearance, after having once been inspired with the boldness to despise and question those opinions they had before had in extremest reverence, such as are those wherein their salvation is concerned, and that some of the

articles of their religion have been brought into doubt and dispute, they very soon throw all other parts of their belief into the same uncertainty, they having in them no other authority or foundation than the others that had already been discomposed, and shake off all the impressions they had received from the authority of the laws or the reverence of ancient custom as a tyrannical yoke,

"For people eagerly spurn that of which they were before most in awe:"

resolving to admit nothing for the future to which they had not first interposed their own decrees, and given their special consent.

Now, my late father, a few days before his death, having casually found this book under a heap of other neglected papers, commanded me to put it for him into French. It is well to translate such authors as this, where is little but the matter itself to express; but those wherein ornament of language and elegance of style are a main endeavor, are dangerous to attempt, especially when a man is to turn them into a weaker idiom. It was a strange and a new occupation for me; but having by chance at that time little else to do, and not being able to resist the command of the best father that ever was, I did it as well as I could; and he was so well pleased with it as to order it to be printed, which after his death was done. I found the imaginations of this author exceedingly fine, the contexture of his work well followed up, and his design full of piety. And because many people take a delight in reading it, and particularly the ladies, to whom we owe the most service, I have often been called upon to assist them to clear the book of two principal objections. His design is hardy and bold; for he undertakes, by human and natural reasons, to establish and make good against the atheists all the articles of the Christian religion: wherein, to speak the truth, he is so firm and so successful that I do not think it possible to do better upon that subject, and believe that he has been equalled by none. This work seeming to me to be too beautiful and too rich for an author whose name is so little known, and of whom all that we know is that he was a Spaniard, professing medicine at Toulouse about two hundred years ago, I inquired of Adrian Turnebus, who knew so many things, what the book might be. He made answer, that he fancied it was some quintessence drawn from St. Thomas Aquinas; for, in truth, that mind, full of infinite learning and admirable subtlety, was alone capable of such imaginations. Be this as it may, and whoever was the author and inventor (and 'tis not reasonable,

without greater occasion, to deprive Sebonde of that title), he was a man of great sufficiency and most admirable parts.

The first thing they reprehend in his work is, that Christians are to blame to repose upon human reasons their belief, which is only conceived by faith and the particular inspiration of divine grace. In which objection there appears to be something of overzeal of piety, and therefore we are to endeavor to satisfy those who put it forth with the greater mildness and respect. This was a task more proper for a man well read in divinity than for me, who know nothing of it; nevertheless, I conceive that in a thing so divine, so high, and so far transcending all human intelligence as is this Truth with which it has pleased the goodness of almighty God to enlighten us, it is very necessary that He should, moreover, lend us His assistance, by extraordinary privilege and favor, to conceive and imprint it in our understandings; and I do not believe that means purely human are, in any sort, capable of doing it: for, if they were, so many rare and excellent souls, so abundantly furnished with natural power, in former ages, had not failed, by their reason, to arrive at this knowledge. 'Tis faith alone that vividly and certainly comprehends the deep mysteries of our religion; but withal, I do not say that it is not a brave and a very laudable attempt to accommodate the natural and human capabilities that God has endowed us with to the service of our faith. It is not to be doubted but that it is the most noble use we can put them to, and that there is no design or occupation more worthy of a Christian man than to make it the aim and end of all his thoughts and studies to embellish, extend, and amplify the truth of his belief. We do not satisfy ourselves with serving God with our souls and understanding only; we, moreover, owe and render Him a corporal reverence, and apply our limbs, motions, and external things to do Him honor; we must here do the same, and accompany our faith with all the reason we have, but always with this reservation, not to fancy that it is upon us that it depends, nor that our arguments and endeavors can arrive at so supernatural and divine a knowledge. If it enter not into us by an extraordinary infusion; if it only enter, not only by arguments of reason, but, moreover, by human ways, it is not in us in its true dignity and splendor, and yet I am afraid we only have it by this way. If we held upon God by the mediation of a lively faith; if we held upon God by Him and not by us; if we had a divine basis and foundation, human accidents would not have the power to shake us as they do; our fortress would not surrender to so weak a battery; the love of

novelty, the constraint of princes, the success of one party, the rash and fortuitous change of our opinions, would not have the power to stagger and alter our belief. We should not then leave it to the mercy of every novel argument, nor abandon it to the persuasions of all the rhetoric in the world; we should withstand the fury of these waves with an unmoved and unyielding constancy:—

> *"As a vast rock repels the broken waves, and dissipates the waters raging about her by its mass."*

If we were but touched with this ray of divinity, it would appear throughout; not only our words, but our works also, would carry its brightness and lustre; whatever proceeded from us would be seen illuminated with this noble light. We ought to be ashamed that in all the human sects there never was sectary, what difficulty and strange novelty soever his doctrine imposed upon him, who did not, in some measure, conform his life and deportment to it; whereas so divine and heavenly an institution as ours only distinguishes Christians by the name. Will you see the proof of this? compare our manners with those of a Mohammedan or Pagan; you will still find that we fall very short, whereas, having regard to the advantage of our religion, we ought to shine in excellence at an extreme, an incomparable distance, and it should be said of us, "Are they so just, so charitable, so good? Then they are Christians." All other signs are common to all religions; hope, trust, events, ceremonies, penance, martyrs; the peculiar mark of our Truth ought to be our virtue, as it is also the most heavenly and difficult mark, and the most worthy product of Truth. And therefore our good St. Louis was in the right, who when the king of the Tartars, who had become a Christian, designed to visit Lyons to kiss the Pope's feet, and there to be an eye-witness of the sanctity he hoped to find in our manners, immediately diverted him from his purpose, for fear lest our disorderly way of living should, on the contrary, put him out of conceit with so holy a belief. Yet it happened quite otherwise, since, to him who going to Rome to the same end, and there seeing the dissoluteness of the prelates and people of that time, settled himself all the more firmly in our religion, considering how great the force and divinity of it must necessarily be that could maintain its dignity and splendor amongst so much corruption and in so vicious hands. If we had but one single grain of faith we should move mountains from their places, says the sacred Word; our actions, that would then be directed and accompanied by the divinity, would not be

merely human; they would have in them something of miraculous as well as our belief:—

"The institution of an honest and happy life is short, if you believe me."

Some impose upon the world that they believe that which they do not believe; others, more in number, make themselves believe that they believe, not being able to penetrate into what it is to believe; and we think it strange if, in the civil wars which at this time disorder our state, we see events float and vary after a common and ordinary manner, which is because we bring nothing there but our own. The justice which is in one of the parties, is only there for ornament and cloak; it is indeed alleged, but 'tis not there received, settled, or espoused: it is there as in the mouth of an advocate, not as in the heart and affection of the party. God owes His extraordinary assistance to faith and religion, not to our passions: men are the conductors and herein make use for their own purposes of religion; it ought to be quite contrary. Observe if it be not by our own hands that we guide and train it, and draw it, like wax, into so many figures, at variance with a rule in itself so direct and firm. When has this been more manifest than in France in our days? They who have taken it on the left hand, they who have taken it on the right, they who call it black, they who call it white, alike employ it to their violent and ambitious designs, and conduct it with a progress so conform in riot and injustice that they render the diversity they pretend in their opinions, in a thing whereon the conduct and rule of our life depends, doubtful and hard to believe. Could one see manners more exactly the same, more uniform, issue from the same school and discipline? Do but observe with what horrid impudence we toss divine arguments to and fro, and how irreligiously we have rejected and retaken them, according as fortune has shifted our places in these intestine storms. This so solemn proposition, "Whether it be lawful for a subject to rebel and take up arms against his prince for the defence of his religion:" do you remember in whose mouths, last year, the affirmative of it was the prop of one party; of what other party the negative was the pillar? and harken now from what quarter come the voice and instruction of both the one and the other; and if arms make less noise and rattle for this cause than for that. We condemn those to the fire who say that Truth must be made to bear the yoke of our necessity; and how much worse does France than say it? Let us confess the truth; whoever should draw out from the army—aye, from that raised by the

king’s authority, those who take up arms out of pure zeal and affection to religion, and also those who only do it to protect the laws of their country, or for the service of their prince, would hardly be able, out of all these put together, to muster one complete company. Whence does it proceed that there are so few to be found who have maintained the same will and the same progress in our public movements, and that we see them one while go but a foot pace, and another run full speed, and the same men, one while damaging our affairs by their violent heat and acrimony, and another while by their coldness, indifference, and slowness, but that they are impelled by special and casual considerations, according to the diversity of circumstances?

I evidently perceive that we do not willingly afford to devotion any other offices but those that best suit with our own passions; there is no hostility so admirable as the Christian; our zeal performs wonders when it seconds our inclinations to hatred, cruelty, ambition, avarice, detraction, rebellion: but moved against the hair towards goodness, benignity, moderation, unless by miracle some rare and virtuous disposition prompt us to it, we stir neither hand nor foot. Our religion is intended to extirpate vices; whereas it screens, nourishes, incites them. We must not mock God. If we did believe in Him, I do not say by faith, but with a simple belief, that is to say (and I speak it to our great shame), if we did believe Him, or knew Him as any other history, or as one of our companions, we should love Him above all other things, for the infinite goodness and beauty that shine in Him: at least, He would go equal in our affections with riches, pleasures, glory, and our friends. The best of us is not so much afraid to offend Him, as he is afraid to offend his neighbor, his kinsman, his master. Is there any so weak understanding that having, on one side, the object of one of our vicious pleasures, and on the other, in equal knowledge and persuasion, the state of an immortal glory, would exchange the one against the other? And yet we ofttimes renounce this out of pure contempt: for what tempts us to blaspheme, if not, peradventure, the very desire to offend? The philosopher Antisthenes, as the priest was initiating him in the mysteries of Orpheus, telling him that those who professed themselves of that religion were certain to receive perfect and eternal felicity after death; “If thou believest that,” answered he, “why dost not thou die thyself?” Diogenes, more rudely, according to his manner, and more remote from our purpose, to the priest that in like manner preached to him to become of his religion that he might

obtain the happiness of the other world: “What,” said he, “thou wouldst have me believe that Agesilaus and Epaminondas, those so great men, shall be miserable, and that thou, who art but a calf, and canst do nothing to purpose, shalt be happy because thou art a priest?” Did we receive these great promises of eternal beatitude with the same reverence and respect that that we do a philosophical lecture, we should not have death in so great horror:—

> *“He should not, then, dying, repine to be dissolved, but rather step out of doors cheerfully, and, like the snake, be glad to cast his slough, or like the old stag, his antlers.”*

“I am willing to be dissolved,” we should say, “and to be with Jesus Christ.” The force of Plato’s argument concerning the immortality of the soul sent some of his disciples to untimely graves, that they might the sooner enjoy the things he had made them hope for.

All this is a most evident sign that we only receive our religion after our own fashion by our own hands, and no otherwise than other religions are received. Either we are in the country where it is in practice, or we bear a reverence to its antiquity, or to the authority of the men who have maintained it, or we fear the menaces it fulminates against unbelievers, or are allured by its promises. These considerations ought, ’tis true, to be applied to our belief, but as subsidiaries only, for they are human obligations; another religion, other testimonies, the like promises and threats, might in the same way imprint a quite contrary belief. We are Christians by the same title that we are Perigordins or Germans. And what Plato says, that there are few men so obstinate in their atheism whom a pressing danger will not reduce to an acknowledgment of the divine power, does not concern a true Christian; ’tis for mortal and human religions to be received by human recommendation. What kind of faith can we expect that should be, that cowardice and feebleness of heart plant and establish in us? A pleasant faith, that does not believe what it believes, but for want of courage to disbelieve it. Can a vicious passion, such as inconstancy and astonishment, cause any regular product in our souls? They are confident in their own judgment, says he, that what is said of hell and future torments is all feigned: but the occasion of making the experiment presenting itself when old age or diseases bring them to the brink of the grave, the terror of death by the horror of their future condition, inspires them with a new belief. And by reason that such impressions render them timorous, he

forbids in his laws all such threatening doctrines, and all persuasion that anything of ill can befall a man from the gods, excepting for his greater good, when they happen to him, and for a medicinal effect. They say of Bion that, infected with the atheism of Theodorus, he had long had religious men in great scorn and contempt, but that, death surprising him, he gave himself up to the most extreme superstition, as if the gods withdrew and returned according to the necessities of Bion. Plato and these examples would conclude that we are brought to a belief of God either by reason or by force. Atheism being a proposition unnatural and monstrous, difficult also and hard to establish in the human understanding, how arrogant and irregular soever that may be, there are enough seen, out of vanity and pride, to be the authors of extraordinary and reforming opinions, and to outwardly affect their profession, who, if they are such fools, have nevertheless not had the power to plant them in their conscience; they will not fail to lift up their hands towards heaven if you give them a good thrust with a sword in the breast; and when fear or sickness has abated and deadened the licentious fervor of this giddy humor they will readily return, and very discreetly suffer themselves to be reconciled to the public faith and examples. A doctrine seriously digested is one thing; quite another thing are those superficial impressions which, springing from the disorder of an unhinged understanding, float at random and uncertainly in the fancy. Miserable and senseless men, who strive to be worse than they can!

The error of paganism and the ignorance of our sacred truth made the great soul of Plato, but great only in human greatness, fall yet into this other vicious mistake, “that children and old men are most susceptible of religion,” as if it sprang and derived its reputation from our weakness. The knot that ought to bind the judgment and the will, that ought to restrain the soul and join it to the Creator, should be a knot that derives its foldings and strength, not from our considerations, from our reasons and passions, but from a divine and supernatural constraint, having but one form, one face, and one lustre, which is the authority of God and His divine grace. Now, our heart and soul being governed and commanded by faith, ’tis but reason that they should muster all our other faculties, for as much as they are able to perform, to the service and assistance of their design. Neither is it to be imagined that all this machine has not some marks imprinted upon it by the hand of the mighty architect, and that there is not in the things of this world, some image, that in some measure resembles the workman who has built

and formed them. He has in His stupendous works left the character of His divinity, and ’tis our own weakness only that hinders us from discerning it. ’Tis what He Himself is pleased to tell us, that He manifests His invisible operations to us, by those that are visible. Sebonde applied himself to this laudable study, and demonstrates to us that there is not any part or member of the world that disclaims or derogates from its maker. It were to do a wrong to the divine goodness, did not the universe consent to our belief; the heavens, the earth, the elements, our bodies and our souls, all these concur to this, if we can but find out the way to use them. They instruct us if we are capable of instruction; for this world is a most sacred temple, into which man is introduced, there to contemplate statues, not the works of a mortal hand, but such as the divine purpose has made the objects of sense, the sun, the stars, the waters, and the earth, to represent those that are intelligible to us. “The invisible things of God,” says St. Paul, “from the creation of the world, His eternal power and Godhead,” are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made:—

> *“And the deity himself does not envy to men the seeing heaven’s face; but ever revolving, he still renews its face and body to our view; and himself so inculcates into our minds that we may well know him, and he may instruct us by seeing what he is, and may oblige us to obey his laws.”*

Now our human reasons and discourses are but sterile and undigested matter: the grace of God is its form; ’tis that which gives to it fashion and value. As the virtuous actions of Socrates and Cato remain vain and fruitless, for not having had the love and obedience of the true Creator of all things for their end and object, and for not having known God, so is it with our imaginations and discourses; they have a kind of body, but it is an inform mass, without fashion and without light, if faith and God’s grace be not added to it. Faith coming to tint and illustrate Sebonde’s arguments, renders them firm and solid, so that they are capable of serving for direction and first guide to a learner to put him into the way of this knowledge: they, in some measure, form him to and render him capable of the grace of God, by means whereof he afterwards completes and perfects himself in the true belief. I know a man of authority, bred up to letters, who has confessed to me that he had been reclaimed from the errors of misbelief by Sebonde’s arguments. And should they be stripped of this ornament and of the assistance and approbation of the faith, and be looked upon as mere human

fancies only, to contend with those who are precipitated into the dreadful and horrible darkness of irreligion, they will even then be found as solid and firm, as any others of the same class that can be opposed against them; so that we shall be ready to say to our opponents:—

“If you have anything better, produce it; otherwise, yield.”

Let them admit the force of our proofs, or let them show us others, and upon some other subject, better woven and of finer thread. I am, unawares, half engaged in the second objection, to which I proposed to make answer in the behalf of Sebonde.

Some say that his arguments are weak and unfit to make good what he proposes, and undertake with great ease to confute them. These are to be a little more roughly handled; for they are more dangerous and malicious than the first. Men willingly wrest the sayings of others to favor their own prejudicated opinions; to an atheist all writings tend to atheism; he corrupts the most innocent matter with his own venom. These have their judgments so prepossessed that they cannot relish Sebonde’s reasons. As to the rest, they think we give them very fair play in putting them into the liberty of fighting our religion with weapons merely human, which, in its majesty full of authority and command, they durst not attack. The means that I use, and that I think most proper, to subdue this frenzy, is to crush and spurn under foot pride and human arrogance; to make them sensible of the inanity, vanity, and nothingness of man; to wrest the wretched arms of their reason out of their hands; to make them bow down and bite the ground, under the authority and reverence of the divine majesty. ’Tis to this alone that knowledge and wisdom appertain; ’tis this alone that can make a true estimate of itself, and from which we purloin whatever we value ourselves upon:—

“The god will not permit that any one shall be wiser than him.”

Let us subdue this presumption, the first foundation of the tyranny of the evil spirit:—

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Understanding is in all the gods, says Plato, and not at all, or very little, in men. Now it is, in the meantime, a great consolation to a Christian man to see our frail and mortal parts so fitly suited to our holy and divine faith, that when we employ them on the subjects of their own mortal and frail nature, they are not, even there, more equally or more firmly applied. Let us see, then, if man has in his power other reasons more forcible than

those of Sebonde; that is to say, if it be in him to arrive at any certainty by argument and reason. For St. Augustin, disputing against these people, has good cause to reproach them with injustice, in that they maintain the parts of our belief to be false that our reason cannot establish; and, to show that a great many things may be and may have been, of which our nature could not found the reason and causes, he proposes to them certain known and indubitable experiences wherein men confess they have no insight; and this he does, as all other things, with a close and ingenious inquisition. We must do more than this, and make them know that, to convict the weakness of their reason, there is no necessity of culling out rare examples; and that it is so defective and so blind, that there is no so clear facility clear enough for it: that to it the easy and the hard is all one; that all subjects equally, and nature in general, disclaims its authority, and rejects its mediation.

What does truth mean, when she preaches to us to fly worldly philosophy, when she so often inculcates to us, that our wisdom is but folly in the sight of God; that the vainest of all vanities is man; that the man who presumes upon his wisdom, does not yet know what wisdom is; and that man, who is nothing, if he think himself to be anything, but seduces and deceives himself? These sentences of the Holy Ghost so clearly and vividly express that which I would maintain, that I should need no other proof against men who would, with all humility and obedience, submit to its authority; but these will be whipped at their own expense, and will not suffer a man to oppose their reason, but by itself.

Let us then now consider a man alone, without foreign assistance, armed only with his own proper arms, and unfurnished of the divine grace and wisdom, which is all his honor, strength, and the foundation of his being: let us see what certainty he has in this fine equipment. Let him make me understand by the force of his reason, upon what foundations he has built those great advantages he thinks he has over other creatures: what has made him believe, that this admirable movement of the celestial arch, the eternal light of those planets and stars that roll so proudly over his head, the fearful motions of that infinite ocean, were established, and continue so many ages, for his service and convenience? Can anything be imagined to be so ridiculous that this miserable and wretched creature, who is not so much as master of himself, but subject to the injuries of all things, should call himself master and emperor of the world, of which he has not power to know the least part, much less to command it? And this privilege which he

attributes to himself, of being the only creature in this grand fabric that has the understanding to distinguish its beauty and its parts, the only one who can return thanks to the architect, and keep account of the revenues and disbursements of the world; who, I wonder, sealed for him this privilege? Let us see his letters-patent for this great and noble charge; were they granted in favor of the wise only? few people would be concerned in that: are fools and wicked persons worthy so extraordinary a favor, and, being the worst part of the world, to be preferred before the rest? Shall we believe this man?

> *"Who has said for whose sake that the world was made? For those living creatures who have the use of reason: these are gods and men, than whom certainly nothing can be better."*

We can never sufficiently decry the impudence of this conjunction. But, wretched creature, what has he in himself worthy of such a blessing? To consider the incorruptible existence of the celestial bodies, their beauty, grandeur, their continual revolution by so exact a rule:—

> *"When we behold the great celestial temples of the world and the firmament studded with glittering stars, and there come into our mind the courses of the moon and sun:"*

to consider the dominion and influence those bodies have not only over our lives and fortunes:—

> *"He makes men's lives and actions depend on the stars,"*

but even over our inclinations, our thoughts and wills, which they govern, incite, and agitate at the mercy of their influences, as our reason finds and tells us:—

> *"Contemplating the distant stars, he finds that they rule by silent laws; that the world is regulated by alternate causes, and that he can discern by certain signs the turns of destiny;"*

to see that not merely a man, not merely a king, but that monarchies, empires, and all this lower world follow the least dance of these celestial motions:—

> *"How great changes each little motion brings: so great is this kingdom that it governs kings themselves;"*

if our virtue, our vices, our knowledge and science, this very discourse we frame of the power of the stars, and this comparison betwixt them and us, proceed, as our reason supposes, by their means and favor:—

"One mad with love may cross the sea and overturn Troy; another's fate is to write laws. Sons kill their fathers: fathers kill their sons: one armed brother wounds another armed brother. These wars are not ours; 'tis fate that compels men to punish themselves thus, and thus to lacerate themselves. . . . 'Tis fate that compels me to write of fate."

If we derive this little portion of reason we have from the bounty of heaven, how is it possible that reason should ever make us equal to it how subject its essence and conditions to our knowledge? Whatever we see in these bodies astonishes us:—

"What contrivance, what tools, what levers, what engines, what workmen, were employed about so stupendous a work?"

Why do we deprive it of soul, of life, and reason? Have we discovered in it any immovable and insensible stupidity, we who have no commerce with the heavens but by obedience? Shall we say that we have discovered in no other creature but man the use of a reasonable soul? What! have we seen anything like the sun? does he cease to be because we have seen nothing like him? and do his motions cease, because there are no others like them? If what we have not seen is not, our knowledge is wonderfully contracted:

"How narrow are our understandings?"

Are they not dreams of human vanity to make the moon a celestial earth? there to fancy mountains and vales, as Anaxagoras did? there to fix habitations and human abodes, and plant colonies for our convenience, as Plato and Plutarch have done, and of our earth to make a beautiful and luminous star?

"Amongst the other inconveniences of mortality, this is one, to have the understanding clouded, and not only a necessity of erring, but a love of error."

"The corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly habitation oppresses the pensive thinker."

Presumption is our natural and original disease. The most wretched and frail of all creatures is man, and withal the proudest. He feels and sees himself lodged here in the dirt and filth of the world, nailed and riveted to the worst and deadest part of the universe, in the lowest story of the house, and most remote from the heavenly arch, with animals of the worst condition of the three, and yet in his imagination will be placing himself above the circle of the moon, and bringing heaven under his feet. 'Tis by

the vanity of the same imagination that he equals himself to God, attributes to himself divine qualities, withdraws and separates himself from the crowd of other creatures, cuts out the shares of animals his fellows and companions, and distributes to them portions of faculties and force as himself thinks fit. How does he know, by the strength of his understanding, the secret and internal motions of animals? and from what comparison betwixt them and us does he conclude the stupidity he attributes to them? When I play with my cat, who knows whether I do not make her more sport than she makes me? we mutually divert one another with our monkey tricks: if I have my hour to begin or to refuse, she also has hers. Plato, in his picture of the Golden Age under Saturn, reckons, amongst the chief advantages that a man then had, his communication with beasts, of whom inquiring and informing himself he knew the true qualities and differences of them all, by which he acquired a very perfect intelligence and prudence, and led his life far more happily than we could do: need we a better proof to condemn human impudence in the concern of beasts? This great author was of opinion that nature, for the most part, in the corporal form she gave them had only regard to the use of prognostics that were in his time thence derived. The defect that hinders communication betwixt them and us, why may it not be on our part as well as theirs? ’Tis yet to determine where the fault lies that we understand not one another; for we understand them no more than they do us; by the same reason they may think us to be beasts as we think them. ’Tis no great wonder if we understand not them when we do not understand a Basque or the Troglodytes; and yet some have boasted that they understood these, as Apollonius Tyaneus, Melampus, Tiresias, Thales, and others. And seeing that, as cosmographers report, there are nations that receive a dog for their king, they must of necessity be able to give some interpretation of his voice and motions. We must observe the parity betwixt us: we have some tolerable apprehension of their sense: and so have beasts of ours, and much in the same proportion. They caress us, they threaten us, and they beg of us, and we do the same to them. As to the rest, we manifestly discover that they have a full and absolute communication amongst themselves, and that they perfectly understand one another, not only those of the same, but of divers kinds:—

> *“The tame herds, and the wilder sorts of brutes, utter dissimilar and various sounds, as fear, or pain, or pleasure influences them.”*

By one kind of barking the horse knows a dog is angry; of another sort of a bark he is not afraid. Even in the very beasts that have no voice at all, we easily conclude, from the social offices we observe amongst them, some other sort of communication; their very motions converse and consult:—

> *"From no far different reason the want of language in children seems to induce them to have recourse to gestures."*

And why not, as well as our mutes, dispute, contest, and tell stories by signs? of whom I have seen some, by practice, so supple and active in that way that, in earnest, they wanted nothing of the perfection of making themselves understood. Lovers are angry, reconciled, intreat, thank, appoint, and, in short, speak all things by their eyes:—

> *"Even silence in a lover can express entreaty."*

What of the hands? We require, promise, call, dismiss, threaten, pray, supplicate, deny, refuse, interrogate, admire, number, confess, repent, fear, confound, blush, doubt, instruct, command, incite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, absolve, abuse, despise, defy, despite, flatter, applaud, bless, humiliate, mock, reconcile, recommend, exalt, entertain, congratulate, complain, grieve, despair, wonder, exclaim, and what not, with a variation and multiplication to the emulation of speech. With the head we invite, demur, confess, deny, give the lie, welcome, honor, reverence, disdain, demand, turn out, rejoice, lament, reject, caress, rebuke, submit, huff, encourage, threaten, assure, inquire. What of the eyebrows? What of the shoulders? There is not a motion that does not speak, and in an intelligible language without discipline, and a public language that every one understands: whence it should follow, the variety and use distinguished from those of others, that this should rather be judged the special property of human nature. I omit what particular necessity on the sudden suggests to those who are in need; the alphabets upon the fingers, grammars in gesture, and the sciences which are only by them exercised and expressed, and the nations that Pliny reports to have no other language. An ambassador of the city of Abdera, after a long harangue to Agis, king of Sparta, demanded of him, "Well, sir, what answer must I return to my fellow-citizens?" "That I have given thee leave," said he, "to say what thou wouldst, and as much as thou wouldst, without ever speaking a word." Is not this a silent speaking, and very easy to be understood?

As to the rest, what is there in our intelligence that we do not see in the operations of animals? Is there a polity better ordered, the offices better

distributed, and more inviolably observed and maintained, than that of bees? Can we imagine that such and so regular a distribution of employments can be carried on without reason and prudence?

> *"Judging from these signs and following these cases, they have said that bees possess a tincture of the divine mind and ethereal breath."*

The swallows that we see at the return of the spring, searching all the corners of our houses for the most commodious places wherein to build their nests, do they seek without judgment, and, amongst a thousand, choose out the most proper for their purpose, without discretion? In that elegant and admirable contexture of their buildings, can birds rather make choice of a square figure than a round, of an obtuse than of a right angle, without knowing their properties and effects? Do they bring water and then clay without knowing that the hardness of the latter grows softer by being wet? Do they mat their palace with moss or down, without foreseeing that their tender young will lie more safe and easy? Do they secure themselves from the rainy winds, and place their lodgings towards the east, without knowing the different qualities of those winds, and considering that one is more wholesome than the other? Why does the spider make her web tighter in one place and slacker in another? Why now make one sort of knot and then another, if she has not deliberation, thought, and conclusion? We sufficiently discover in most of their works how much animals excel us, and how weak our art is to imitate them. We see, nevertheless, in our ruder performances that we there employ all our faculties and apply the utmost power of our souls; why do we not conclude the same of them? Why should we attribute to I know not what natural and servile inclination the works that surpass all we can do by nature and art? Wherein, before we are aware, we give them a mighty advantage over us, in making nature, with a maternal sweetness, to accompany and lead them, as it were, by the hand, to all the actions and commodities of their life, whilst she leaves us to chance and fortune, and to seek out, by art, the things that are necessary to our conservation; at the same time denying us the means of being able, by any instruction or contention of understanding, to arrive at the natural sufficiency of beasts; so that their brutish stupidity surpasses in all conveniences all that our divine intelligence can do. Really, at this rate, we might with great reason call her an unjust stepmother: but it is nothing so: our polity is not so irregular and deformed.

Nature has been universally kind to all her creatures, and there is not one she has not amply furnished with all means necessary for the conservation of its being; for the common complaints that I hear men make (as the license of their opinions one while lifts them up to the clouds, and then again depresses them to the Antipodes), that we are the only animal abandoned, naked upon the bare earth, tied and bound, not having wherewithal to arm and clothe us, but by the spoil of others; whereas nature has covered all other creatures with shells, husks, bark, hair, wool, prickles, leather, down, feathers, scales, silk, according to the necessities of their being; has armed them with talons, teeth, horns, wherewith to assault and defend, and has herself taught them that which is most proper for them, to swim, to run, to fly, and to sing, whereas man neither knows how to walk, speak, eat, or do anything but weep, without teaching:—

> *"Then the infant, like a mariner tossed by the raging billows upon the shore, lies naked on the earth, destitute at his very birth of all vital support, from the time when Nature brought him forth from his mother's womb with travail, and he fills the air with doleful cries, as is just, to whom in life it remains only to pass through troubles. But beasts, wild and tame, of themselves grow up: they need no rattle, no nurse with soothing words to teach them to talk: they do not look out for different robes according to the seasons, and need no arms nor walls to protect them and their goods: earth and nature in all abundance produce all things whereof they have need."*

Those complaints are false; there is in the polity of the world a greater quality and more uniform relation. Our skins are as sufficient to defend us from the injuries of the weather as theirs for them: witness several nations that still know not the use of clothes. Our ancient Gauls were but slenderly clad, no more than the Irish, our neighbors in so cold a climate. But we may better judge of this by ourselves: for all those parts that we are pleased to expose to the wind and the air, the face, the hands, the lips, the shoulders, the head, according to various custom, are found very able to endure it: if there be a tender part about us, and that seems to be in danger of cold, it should be the stomach where the digestion is, and yet our forefathers had this always open, and our ladies, tender and delicate as they are, go sometimes half bare as low as the navel. Nor is the binding and swathing of infants any more necessary; and the Lacedaemonian mothers brought up theirs in all liberty of motion of members, without any ligature at all. Our

crying is common to us, with most other animals, and there are but few creatures that are not observed to groan and bemoan themselves a long time after they come into the world, forasmuch as it is a behavior suitable to the weakness wherein they find themselves. As to the usage of eating, it is in us, as in them, natural, and without instruction:—

> *"For every one soon finds out his natural force, which he may abuse."*

Who doubts but an infant, arrived to the strength of feeding himself, may shift to seek his food? and the earth produces and offers him wherewithal to supply his necessity without other culture and art, and if not at all times, no more does she do it to beasts; witness the provision we see ants and other creatures hoard up against the dead seasons of the year. The late discovered nations, so abundantly furnished with meat and natural drink, without trouble or preparation, give us to understand that bread is not our only food, and that without tillage our mother Nature has provided us abundantly with all we stand in need of; nay, it would appear still more fully and plentifully than she does at present, when we have mixed up these with our own industry:—

> *"The earth at first spontaneously afforded glossy fruits and glad wines to mankind; gave them prolific herds and glowing harvests, which now scarcely by art more abundantly yield, though men and oxen strive to improve the soil:"*

the depravity and irregularity of our appetite outstrip all the inventions we can contrive to satisfy it.

As to arms, we have more that are natural than most other animals, more various motions of the limbs, and naturally and without lessons, extract more service from them: those that are trained up to fight naked, are seen to throw themselves upon hazard like our own; if some beasts surpass us in this advantage, we surpass several others. And the industry of fortifying the body and protecting it by acquired means we have by instinct and natural precept; as, for examples: the elephant sharpens and whets the teeth he makes use of in war (for he has particular ones for that service which he spares and never employs at all to any other use); when bulls go to fight, they toss and throw the dust about them; boars whet their tusks; and the ichneumon, when he is about to engage with the crocodile, fortifies his body by covering and encrusting it all over with close-wrought, well-

kneaded slime, as with a cuirass: why shall we not say, that it is also natural for us to arm ourselves with wood and iron?

As to speech, it is certain that, if it be not natural, it is not necessary. Nevertheless, I believe that a child who had been brought up in absolute solitude, remote from all society of men (which would be a trial very hard to make) would have some kind of speech to express his meaning: and ’tis not to be supposed that nature should have denied that to us which she has given to several other animals: for what other than speech is this faculty we observe in them of complaining, rejoicing, calling to one another for succor, and the softer murmurings of love, which they perform with the voice? And why should they not speak to one another? they speak very well to us, and we to them; in how many several ways do we speak to our dogs, and they answer us? We converse with them in another sort of language and other appellations than we do with birds, hogs, oxen, and horses; and alter the idiom according to the kind:—

> *“So amongst their sable bands, one ant with another is seen to communicate: observe, perhaps, each others’ ways and ask what prizes they have brought home.”*

Lactantius seems to attribute to beasts not only speech, but laughter also. And the difference of language which is manifest amongst us, according to the variety of countries, is also observed in animals of the same kind: Aristotle, in proof of this, instances the various calls of partridges, according to the situation of places:—

> *“Various birds make quite different notes; some their hoarse songs change with the seasons.”*

But it is yet to be known what language this child would speak; and of this what is said by guess has no great weight. If any one should allege to me, in opposition to this opinion, that those who are naturally deaf, speak not: I answer, that this follows not only because they could not receive the instruction of speaking by the ear, but because the sense of hearing, of which they are deprived, has relation to that of speaking, holding together by a natural tie; in such manner, that what we speak we must first speak to ourselves within, and make it first sound in our own ears, before we can utter it to others.

All this I have said to prove the resemblance there is in human things, and to bring us back and join us to the crowd: we are neither above nor

below the rest. All that is under heaven, says the wise man, runs one law and one fortune:—

"All things are bound in the same fatal chains."

There is indeed some difference; there are orders and degrees; but 'tis under the aspect of one same nature:—

"Each thing proceeds by its own rule, and all observe the laws of nature under a sure agreement."

Man must be compelled and restrained within the bounds of this polity. Wretched being, he is really not in a condition to step over the rail; he is fettered and circumscribed, he is subjected to a co-ordinate obligation with the other creatures of his class, and of a very humble condition, without any prerogative or pre-eminence true and real; that which he attributes to himself, by vain fancy and opinion, has neither body nor taste. And if it be so, that he only of all the animals has this privilege of the imagination, and this irregularity of thoughts representing to him that which is, that which is not, and that he would have, the false and the true; 'tis an advantage dearly bought, and of which he has very little reason to be proud; for from that springs the principal fountain of all the evils that befall him, sin, sickness, irresolution, affliction, despair. I say then (to return to my subject) that there is no probability to induce a man to believe, that beasts, by natural and compulsory tendency, do the same things that we do by our choice and industry; we ought, from like effects, to conclude like faculties, and from greater effects greater faculties, and consequently confess that the same reason, the same method by which we operate, are common with them, or that they have others that are better. Why should we imagine in them this natural constraint, who experience no such effect in ourselves? Add to which, that it is more honorable to be guided and obliged to act regularly by a natural and irresistible condition, and nearer allied to the Divinity, than to act regularly by a licentious and fortuitous liberty, and more safe to intrust the reins of our conduct in the hands of nature than in our own. The vanity of our presumption is the cause that we had rather owe our sufficiency to our own strength than to her bounty, and that we enrich the other animals with natural goods, and renounce them in their favor, to honor and ennoble ourselves with goods acquired; very foolishly in my opinion; for I should as much value parts naturally and purely my own, as those I had begged and obtained from education: it is not in our power to obtain a nobler reputation, than to be favored of God and nature.

For this reason, consider the fox, of which the people of Thrace make use when they desire to pass over the ice of some frozen river, turning him out before them to that purpose; should we see him lay his ear upon the bank of the river, down to the ice, to listen if from a more remote or nearer distance he can hear the noise of the water's current, and according as he finds by that the ice to be of a less or greater thickness, retire or advance: should we not have reason thence to believe that he had the same thoughts in his head that we should have upon the like occasion, and that it is a ratiocination and consequence drawn from natural sense: "that which makes a noise, runs; that which runs, is not frozen: what is not frozen is liquid; and that which is liquid yields to impression?" For to attribute this to a vivacity of the sense of hearing without meditation and consequence, is a chimera that cannot enter into the imagination. We may suppose the same of the many subtleties and inventions with which beasts protect themselves from enterprises we plot against them.

And if we would make an advantage of this that it is in our power to seize them, to employ them in our service, and to use them at our pleasure, 'tis but still the same advantage we have over one another. We have our slaves upon these terms; and the Climacidae, were they not women in Syria who, being on all fours, served for a stepladder, by which the ladies mounted the coach? And the majority of free persons surrender, for very trivial advantages, their life and being into the power of another; the wives and concubines of the Thracians contended who should be chosen to be slain upon their husband's tomb. Have tyrants ever failed of finding men enough devoted to their service; some of them, moreover, adding this necessity of accompanying them in death as in life? whole armies have so bound themselves to their captains. The form of the oath in that rude school of fencers, who were to fight it out to the last, was in these words: "We swear to suffer ourselves to be chained, burned, beaten, killed with the sword, and to endure all that true gladiators suffer from their master, religiously engaging both bodies and souls in his services:"—

> *"Burn my head with fire if you will, wound me with steel, and scourge my shoulders with twisted wire:"*

this was an obligation indeed, and yet there were, in some years, ten thousand who entered into it and lost themselves in it. When the Scythians interred their king, they strangled upon his body the most beloved of his concubines, his cupbearer, the master of his horse, his chamberlain, the

usher of his chamber, and his cook; and upon his anniversary they killed fifty horses, mounted by fifty pages, whom they had impaled up the spine of the back to the throat, and there left them planted in parade about his tomb. The men that serve us do it more cheaply, and for a less careful and favorable usage than that we entertain our hawks, horses, and dogs with. To what solicitude do we not submit for the convenience of these? I do not think that servants of the most abject condition would willingly do that for their masters, that princes think it an honor to do for these beasts. Diogenes seeing his relations solicitous to redeem him from servitude: “They are fools,” said he; “ ’tis he that keeps and feeds me is my servant, not I his.” And they, who make so much of beasts, ought rather to be said to serve them, than to be served by them. And withal they have this more generous quality, that one lion never submitted to another lion, nor one horse to another, for want of courage. As we go to the chase of beasts, so do tigers and lions to the chase of men, and they do the same execution one upon another, dogs upon hares, pikes upon tench, swallows upon flies, sparrowhawks upon blackbirds and larks:—

> *“The stork feeds her young with the snake and with lizards found in rural bye-places. And the noble birds attendant on Jupiter hunt in the wood for hares and kids.”*

We divide the quarry, as well as the pains and labor of the chase, with our hawks and hounds; and above Amphipolis in Thrace, the hawkers and wild falcons equally divide the prey; as also, along the Lake Maeotis, if the fisherman does not honestly leave the wolves an equal share of what he has caught, they presently go and tear his nets in pieces. And as we have a way of hunting that is carried on more by subtlety than force, as angling with line and hook, there is also the like amongst animals. Aristotle says that the cuttle-fish casts a gut out of her throat as long as a line, which she extends and draws back at pleasure; and as she perceives some little fish approach, she let it nibble upon the end of this gut, lying herself concealed in the sand or mud, and by little and little draws it in, till the little fish is so near her, that at one spring she may surprise it.

As to what concerns strength, there is no creature in the world exposed to so many injuries as man: we need not a whale, an elephant, or a crocodile, nor any such animals, of which one alone is sufficient to defeat a great number of men, to do our business: lice are sufficient to vacate Sylla’s

dictatorship; and the heart and life of a great and triumphant emperor is the breakfast of a little worm.

Why should we say that it is only for man by knowledge, improved by art and meditation, to distinguish the things commodious for his being and proper for the cure of his diseases from those which are not so; to know the virtues of rhubarb and fern: when we see the goats of Candia, when wounded with an arrow, amongst a million of plants choose out dittany for their cure, and the tortoise, when she has eaten of a viper, immediately go to look out for marjoram to purge her; the dragon rubs and clears his eyes with fennel; the storks give themselves clysters of seawater; the elephants draw out, not only of their own bodies and those of their companions, but out of the bodies of their master too (witness the elephant of King Porus, whom Alexander defeated) the dart and javelins thrown at them in battle, and that so dexterously that we ourselves could not do it with so little pain; why do not we say here also that this is knowledge and prudence? For to allege to their disparagement that ’tis by the sole instruction and dictate of nature that they know all this, is not to take from them the dignity of knowledge and prudence, but with greater reason to attribute it to them than to us, for the honor of so infallible a mistress. Chrysippus, though in all other things as scornful a judge of the condition of animals as any other philosopher whatever, considering the motions of a dog who, coming to a place where three ways meet, either to hunt after his master he has lost, or in pursuit of some game that flies before him, goes snuffing first in one of the ways and then in another, and after having made himself sure of two, without finding the trace of what he seeks, throws himself into the third without examination, is forced to confess that this reasoning is in the dog: “I have followed my master by foot to this place; he must, of necessity, be gone by one of these three ways; he is not gone this way nor that; he must then infallibly be gone this other:” and that assuring himself by such reasoning and conclusion, he makes no use of his nose in the third way, nor ever lays it to the ground, but suffers himself to be carried on by the force of reason. This mode, which is purely logical, and this method of propositions divided and conjoined, and the right enumeration of parts, is it not every whit as good that the dog knows all this of himself as if he had learnt it of Trapezuntius?

Nor are animals incapable of being instructed after our method. We teach blackbirds, ravens, pies, and parrots to speak; and the facility

wherewith we see them render their voices and breath so supple and pliant to be formed and confined within a certain number of letters and syllables, evinces that they have a reasoning examination of things within that makes them so docile and willing to learn.

Everybody, I believe, is glutted with the several sorts of tricks that tumblers teach their dogs; the dances where they do not miss any one cadence of the sound they hear; the many various motions and leaps they make them perform by the command of a word. But I observe with more admiration this effect, which, nevertheless, is very common, in the dogs that lead the blind both in the country and in cities: I have taken notice how they stop at certain doors, where they are wont to receive alms; how they avoid the encounter of coaches and carts, even where they have sufficient room to pass; I have seen them, along the trench of a town, forsake a plain and even path, and take a worse, only to keep their masters farther from the ditch. How could a man have made this dog understand that it was his office to look to his master’s safety only, and to despise his own convenience to serve him? And how had he the knowledge that a way was large enough for him that was not so for a blind man? Can all this be apprehended without ratiocination?

I must not omit what Plutarch says he saw of a dog at Rome with the Emperor Vespasian, the father, at the theatre of Marcellus: this dog served a player who acted a farce of several gestures and several personages and had therein his part. He had, amongst other things, to counterfeit himself for some time dead, by reason of a certain drug he was supposed to have eaten: after he had swallowed a piece of bread, which passed for the drug, he began after a while to tremble and stagger, as if he was stupefied: at last, stretching himself out stiff, as if he had been dead, he suffered himself to be drawn and dragged from place to place, as it was his part to do; and afterward, when he knew it to be time, he began first gently to stir, as if newly awakened out of profound sleep, and lifting up his head, looked about him after such a manner as astonished all the spectators.

The oxen that served in the royal gardens of Susa to water them and turn certain great wheels to draw water for that purpose, to which buckets were fastened (such as there are many in Languedoc), being ordered every one to draw a hundred turns a day, they were so accustomed to this number that it was impossible by force to make them draw one turn more, but, their task being performed, they would suddenly stop and stand still. We are

almost men before we can count a hundred, and have lately discovered nations that have no knowledge of numbers at all.

There is still more understanding required in the teaching of others than in being taught; now, setting aside what Democritus held and proved, that most of the arts we have were taught us by other animals, as the spider has taught us to weave and sew, the swallow to build, the swan and nightingale music, and several animals, in imitating them, to make medicines: Aristotle is of opinion that the nightingale teach their young ones to sing and spend a great deal of time and care in it, whence it happens that those we bring up in cages and that have not had time to learn of their parents, lose much of the grace of their singing: we may judge by this that they improve by discipline and study: and even amongst the wild birds they are not all one and alike; every one has learnt to do better or worse, according to its capacity; and so jealous are they of one another whilst learning, that they contend with emulation, and with so vigorous a contention that sometimes the vanquished fall dead upon the spot, the breath rather failing than the voice. The younger ruminate pensive, and begin to imitate some broken notes; the disciple listens to the master’s lesson, and gives the best account it is able; they are silent by turns; one may hear faults corrected and observe reprehensions of the teacher. “I have formerly seen,” says Arrian, “an elephant having a cymbal hung at each leg, and another fastened to his trunk, at the sound of which all the others danced about him, rising and falling at certain cadences, as they were guided by the instrument, and it was delightful to hear this harmony.” In the spectacles of Rome, there were ordinarily seen elephants taught to move and dance to the sound of the voice, dances wherein were several changes and steps, and cadences very hard to learn. And some have been seen, in private, so intent upon their lesson as to practise it by themselves, that they might not be chidden nor beaten by their masters.

But this other story of the magpie, for which we have Plutarch himself to answer, is very strange; she was in a barber’s shop at Rome, and did wonders in imitating with her voice whatever she heard. It happened one day that certain trumpeters stood a good while sounding before the shop. After that, and all the next day, the magpie was pensive, dumb, and melancholy, which everybody wondered at and thought that the noise of the trumpet had thus stupefied and dazed her, and that her voice was gone with her hearing; but they found at last that it was a profound meditation and a

retiring into herself, her thoughts exercising and preparing her voice to imitate the sound of those trumpets; so that the first voice she uttered was perfectly to imitate their strains, stops, and changes: having, for this new lesson, quitted and disdained all she had learned before.

I will not omit this other example of a dog, which the same Plutarch (I can’t tell them in order, as to which I get confused; nor do I observe it here any more than elsewhere in my work) says he saw on shipboard: this dog being puzzled how to get at the oil that was in the bottom of a jar and which he could not reach with his tongue, by reason of the narrow mouth of the vessel, went and fetched stones, and let them fall into the jar, till he made the oil rise so high, that he could reach it. What is this but an effect of a very subtle capacity? ’Tis said that the ravens of Barbary do the same, when the water they would drink is too low. This action is something akin to what Juba, a king of their nation, relates of the elephants: that, when by the craft of the hunter, one of them is trapped in certain deep pits prepared for them and covered over with brush to deceive them, all the rest diligently bring a great many stones and logs of wood to raise the bottom so that he may get out. But this animal in several other features comes so near to human capacity, that should I particularly relate all that experience has delivered to us, I should easily have granted me what I ordinarily maintain, namely, that there is more difference betwixt such and such a man, than betwixt such a man and such a beast. The keeper of an elephant, in a private house of Syria, robbed him every meal of the half of his allowance: one day his master would himself feed him and poured the full measure of barley he had ordered for his allowance into his manger; at which the elephant, casting an angry look at his keeper, with his trunk separated the one half from the other, and thrust it aside, thus declaring the wrong that was done him. And another, having a keeper that mixed stones with his corn to make up the measure, came to the pot where he was boiling flesh for his own dinner, and filled it with ashes. These are particular facts: but that which all the world has seen, and all the world knows, is that in all the armies of the East one of their greatest elements of strength was elephants, with whom they did without comparison far more execution than we now do with our artillery, which is, as it were, in their stead in a day of battle (as may easily be judged by such as are read in ancient history):—

> “*The ancestors of these were wont to serve the Tyrian Hannibal, and our own captains, and the Molossian king, and to bear upon their*

backs cohorts, as a part of war, and (to bring) the tower, going into battle."

They must of necessity very confidently have relied upon the fidelity and understanding of these beasts, when they entrusted them with the vanguard of a battle, where the least stop they should have made, by reason of the bulk and heaviness of their bodies, and the least fright that should have made them face about upon their own people, had been enough to spoil all. And there are but few examples where it has happened that they have fallen foul upon their own troops, whereas we ourselves break into our own battalions and rout one another. They had the commission, not of one simple movement only, but of many several things they were to perform in the battle; as the Spaniards did to their dogs in their new conquest of the Indies, to whom they gave pay and allowed them a share in the spoil; and those animals showed as much dexterity and judgment in pursuing the victory and stopping the pursuit, in charging and retiring as occasion required, and in distinguishing their friends from their enemies, as they did ardor and fierceness.

We more admire and value things that are unusual and strange than those of ordinary observation; I had not else so long insisted upon these examples, for I believe, whoever shall strictly observe what we ordinarily see in those animals we have amongst us, may there find as wonderful effects as those we fetch from remote countries and ages. 'Tis one same nature that rolls her course, and whoever has sufficiently considered the present state of things, might certainly conclude as to both the future and the past. I have formerly seen men brought hither by sea, from very distant countries, whose language not being understood by us, and, moreover, their mien, countenance, and dress being quite different from ours, which of us did not repute them savages and brutes? Who did not attribute it to stupidity and want of common sense, to see them mute, ignorant of the French tongue, ignorant of our salutations, cringes, our port and behavior, from which, of course, all human nature must take its pattern and example. All that seems strange to us, and what we do not understand we condemn. The same thing happens also in the judgment we make of beasts. They have several conditions like to ours; from those we may by comparison draw some conjecture: but of those qualities that are particular to them, how know we what to make of them? The horses, dogs, oxen, sheep, birds, and most of the animals that live amongst us, know our voices, and suffer

themselves to be governed by them: so did Crassus' lamprey, that came when he called it; as also do the eels that are in the lake Arethusa; and I have seen ponds where the fishes run to eat at a certain call of those who use to feed them:—

"Each has its own name, and comes at the master's call;"

we may judge from that. We may also say that elephants have some share of religion, forasmuch as, after several washings and purifications, they are observed to lift up their trunks like arms, and, fixing their eyes towards the rising sun, continue long in meditation and contemplation, at certain hours of the day of their own motion without instruction or precept. But because we do not see any such signs in other animals, we cannot thence conclude that they are without religion, nor form any judgment of what is concealed from us; as we discern something in this action which the philosopher Cleanthes took notice of, because it something resembles our own: he saw, he says, ants go from their ant-hill, carrying the dead body of an ant towards another ant-hill, from which several other ants came out to meet them, as if to speak with them; whither, after having been some while together, the last returned, to consult, you may suppose, with their fellow-citizens, and so made two or three journeys, by reason of the difficulty of capitulation: in the conclusion, the last comers brought the first a worm out of their burrow, as it were for the ransom of the defunct, which the first laid upon their backs and carried home, leaving the dead body to the others. This was the interpretation that Cleanthes gave of this transaction, as manifesting that those creatures that have no voice are not, nevertheless, without mutual communication and dealings, whereof 'tis through our own defect that we do not participate, and for that reason foolishly take upon us to pass our judgment upon it. But they yet produce other effects much beyond our capacity, to which we are so far from being able to arrive by imitation, that we cannot so much as by imagination conceive them. Many are of opinion that in the great and last naval engagement that Antony lost to Augustus, his admiral galley was stayed in the middle of her course by the little fish the Latins call Remora, by reason of the property she has of staying all sorts of vessels to which she fastens herself. And the Emperor Caligula, sailing with a great navy upon the coast of Romania, his galley alone was suddenly stayed by the same fish; which he caused to be taken, fastened as it was to the keel of his ship, very angry that such a little animal could resist at once the sea, the wind, and the force of all his oars, by being

merely fastened by the beak to his galley (for it is a shellfish); and was moreover, not without great reason, astonished that being brought to him in the longboat it had no longer the strength it had in the water. A citizen of Cyzicus formerly acquired the reputation of a good mathematician from having learned the ways of the hedgehog: he has his burrow open in divers places and to several winds, and foreseeing the wind that is to come stops the hole on that side, which the citizen observing, gave the city certain prediction of the wind which was presently to blow. The chameleon takes his color from the place upon which he is laid; but the polypus gives himself what color he pleases, according to occasion, either to conceal himself from what he fears, or from what he has a design to seize: in the chameleon ’tis a passive, but in the polypus ’tis an active change. We have some changes of color, as in fear, anger, shame, and other passions, that alter our complexion; but it is by the effect of suffering, as with the chameleon. It is in the power of the jaundice, indeed, to make us turn yellow, but ’tis not in the power of our own will. Now these effects that we discern in other animals, much greater than our own, imply some more excellent faculty in them, unknown to us; as, ’tis to be presumed, are several other qualities and capacities of theirs of which no appearance reaches us.

Amongst all the predictions of elder times, the most ancient and the most certain were those taken from the flights of birds; we have nothing like it, not anything so much to be admired. That rule and order of moving, the wing, from which were prognosticated the consequences of future things, must of necessity be guided by some excellent means to so noble an operation: for to attribute this great effect to any natural disposition, without the intelligence, consent, and reason of the creature by which it is produced, is an opinion evidently false. And, in proof, the torpedo has this quality, not only to benumb all the members that touch her, but even through the nets to transmit a heavy dulness into the hands of those that move and handle them; nay, it is further said that, if one pour water upon her, he will feel this numbness mount up the water to the hand and stupefy the feeling through the water. This is a miraculous force; but ’tis not useless to the torpedo; she knows it and makes use of it; for to catch the prey she desires she will bury herself in the mud that other fishes, swimming over her, struck and benumbed with this coldness of hers, may fall into her power. Cranes, swallows, and other birds of passage, by shifting their abode according to

the seasons, sufficiently manifest the knowledge they have of their divining faculty, and put it in use. Huntsmen assure us that to cull out from amongst a great many puppies, that which ought to be preserved for the best, the simple way is to refer the choice to the dam, as thus: take them and carry them out of the kennel, and the first she brings back, will certainly be the best; or, if you make a show as if you would environ the kennel with fire, the one she first catches up to save: by which it appears they have a sort of prognostic that we have not; or that they have some capacity in judging of their whelps other and clearer than we have.

The manner of coming into the world, of engendering, nourishing, acting, moving, living, and dying of beasts, is so near to ours, that whatever we retrench from their moving causes and add to our own condition above theirs, can by no means proceed from any meditation of our own reason. For the regimen of our health, physicians propose to us the example of the beasts' way of living, for this saying has in all times been in the mouth of the people:—

"Keep warm your feet and head; as to the rest, live like a beast."

Generation is the principle of natural action. We have a certain disposition of members most proper and convenient for us in that affair: nevertheless, some order us to conform to the posture of brutes, as the most effectual:—

- "More ferarum,
- Quadrupedumque magis ritu, plerumque putantur
- Concipere uxores: quia sic loca sumere possunt,
- Pectoribus positis, sublatis semina lumbis;"

and condemn as hurtful those indecent and indiscreet motions the women have superadded to the work; recalling them to the example and practice of the beasts of their own sex, more sober and modest:—

- "Nam mulier prohibet se concipere atque repugnat,
- Clunibus ipsa viri Venerem si laeta retractet,
- Atque exossato ciet omni pectore fluctus.
- Ejicit enim sulci recta regione viaque
- Vomerem, atque locis avertit seminis ictum."

If it be justice to render to every one his due, the beasts that serve, love, and defend their benefactors, and that pursue and fall upon strangers and those who offend them, do in this represent a certain air of our justice: as also in observing a very equitable equality in the distribution of what they have to their young. As to friendship, they have it, without comparison, more vivid and constant than men have. King Lysimachus' dog, Hyrcanus, his master being dead, lay upon his bed, obstinately refusing either to eat or drink, and the day that his body was burnt, he took a run and leaped into the fire, where he was consumed. As also did the dog of one Pyrrhus, for he would not stir from off his master's bed from the time that he died; and when they carried him away let himself be carried with him, and at last leaped into the pile where they burnt his master's body. There are certain inclinations of affection which sometimes spring in us without the consultation of reason and by a fortuitous temerity, which others call sympathy: of this beasts are as capable as we. We see horses form an acquaintance with one another, that we have much ado to make them eat or travel when separated; we observe them to fancy a particular color in those of their own kind, and where they meet it, run to it with great joy and demonstrations of goodwill, and to have a dislike and hatred for some other color. Animals have choice, as well as we, in their amours, and cull out their mistresses; neither are they exempt from our extreme and implacable jealousies and envies.

Desires are either natural and necessary, as to eat and drink; or natural and not necessary, as the coupling with females; or neither natural nor necessary: of which last sort are almost all the desires of men; they are all superfluous and artificial; for 'tis not to be believed how little will satisfy nature, how little she has left us to desire; the dishes in our kitchens do not touch her ordinance; the Stoics say that a man may live on an olive a day; our delicacy in our wines is no part of her instruction, nor the over-charging the appetites of love: —

- "Numquid ego a te
- Magno prognatum deposco consule cunnum."

These irregular desires, that ignorance of good and a false opinion have infused into us, are so many that they almost exclude all the natural, just as if there were so great a number of strangers in a city as to thrust out

the natural inhabitants and, usurping their ancient rights and privileges, extinguish their authority and power. Animals are much more regular than we, and keep themselves with greater moderation within the limits nature has prescribed; but yet not so exactly, that they have not some analogy with our debauches; and as there have been known furious desires that have compelled men to the love of beasts, so there have been examples of beasts that have fallen in love with us, and admit monstrous affections betwixt different kinds: witness the elephant who was rival to Aristophanes the grammarian in the love of a young flower-girl in the city of Alexandria, which was nothing behind him in all the offices of a very passionate suitor: for going through the market where they sold fruit, he would take some in his trunk and carry it to her: he would as much as possible keep her always in his sight, and would sometimes put his trunk under her kerchief into her bosom and felt her teats. They tell also of a dragon in love with a maid; and of a goose enamored of a child in the town of Asopus; of a ram that was a lover of the minstreless Glaucia; and there are every day baboons furiously in love with women. We see also certain male animals that are fond of the males of their own kind. Oppianus and others give us some examples of the reverence that beasts have to their kindred in their copulation; but experience often shows us the contrary:—

> *"The heifer thinks it no shame to take her sire upon her back; the horse his daughter leaps; goats increase the herd by those they have begot; birds of all sorts live in common, and by the seed they were conceived conceive."*

For malicious subtlety, can there be a more pregnant example than in the philosopher Thales's mule? He, laden with salt and fording a river, and by accident stumbling there, so that the sacks he carried were all wet, perceiving that by the melting of the salt his burden was something lighter, never failed, so often as he came to any river, to lie down with his load; till his master, discovering the knavery, ordered that he should be laden with wool, wherein finding himself mistaken he ceased to practise that device. There are several that are the very image of our avarice, for we see them infinitely solicitous to catch all they can and hide it with exceeding great care, though they never make any use of it at all. As to thrift, they surpass us not only in the foresight and laying up and saving for the time to come, but they have moreover a great deal of the science necessary thereto. The ants bring abroad into the sun their grain and seeds to air, refresh, and dry

them, when they perceive them to mould and grow musty, lest they should decay and rot. But the caution and foresight they exhibit in gnawing their grains of wheat, surpass all imagination of human prudence: for by reason that the wheat does not always continue sound and dry, but grows soft, thaws and dissolves, as if it were steeped in milk, whilst hastening to germination, for fear lest it should shoot and lose the nature and property of a magazine for their subsistence, they nibble off the end by which it should shoot and sprout.

As to what concerns war, which is the greatest and most pompous of human actions, I would very fain know, whether we would use that for an argument of some prerogative, or, on the contrary, for a testimony of our weakness and imperfection; for, in truth, the science of undoing and killing one another, and of ruining and destroying our own kind, has nothing in it so tempting as to make it coveted by beasts who have it not:—

> *"What stronger lion ever took the life from a weaker? or in what forest was a small boar slain by the teeth of a larger one?"*

yet are they not universally exempt; witness the furious encounters of bees, and the enterprises of the princes of the two opposite armies:—

> *"Often, betwixt two kings, animosities arise with great commotion; then, straight, the common sort are heard from afar preparing for the war."*

I never read this divine description but that, methinks, I there see human folly and vanity represented in their true and lively colors: for these preparations for war that so frighten and astound us with their noise and tumult, this rattle of guns, drums, and confused voices:—

> *"When the glancing ray of arms rises heavenward, and the earth glows with beams of shining brass, and is trampled by horses and by men, and the rocks, struck by the various cries, reverberate the sounds to the skies;"*

in this dreadful embattling of so many thousands of armed men, and so great fury, ardor, and courage, 'tis pleasant to consider by what idle occasions they are excited, and by how light ones appeased:—

> *"By reason of Paris' love, Greece and the Barbarians (foreigners) engaged in dire warfare;"*

all Asia was ruined and destroyed for the ungoverned lust of one Paris: the envy of one single man, a despite, a pleasure or a domestic jealousy, causes that ought not to set two oyster wenches by the ears, is the soul and

mover of all this mighty bustle. Shall we believe those who are themselves the principal authors of these mischiefs? Let us then hear the greatest and most victorious emperor that ever was making sport of, and with marvellous ingenuity turning into a jest, the many battles fought both by sea and land, the blood and lives of five hundred thousand men that followed his fortune, and the power and riches of two parts of the world, drained for the service of his expeditions:—

- “Quod futuit Glaphyran Antonius, hanc mihi paenam
- Fulvia constituit, se quoque uti futuam.
- Fulviam ego ut futuam? Quid, si me Manius oret
- Paedicem, faciam? Non puto, si sapiam.
- Aut futue, aut pugnemus, ait. Quid, si mihi vita
- Charior est ipsa mentula? Signa canant.”

(I use my Latin with the liberty of conscience you are pleased to allow me.) Now this great body, with so many fronts and motions as seem to threaten heaven and earth:—

> *“As the innumerable waves that roll on the Lybian shore, when stormy Orion, winter returning, plunges into the waters; or as the golden ears, scorched by the summer’s ray, on Hermus banks or fruitful Lycia, the bright shields dreadfully resound, and as the soldiers march, their footing shakes the ground:”*

this furious monster, with so many heads and arms, is yet man, feeble, calamitous, and miserable; ’tis but an ant-hill of ants disturbed and provoked:—

> *“The black troop marches to the field:”*

a contrary wind, the croaking of a flight of ravens, the stumble of a horse, the casual passage of an eagle, a dream, a voice, a sign, a morning mist, are any one of them sufficient to beat down and overturn him. Dart but a sunbeam in his face, he is melted and vanished: blow but a little dust in his eyes, as our poet says of the bees, and all our standards and legions, with the great Pompey himself at the head of them, are routed and crushed to pieces: for it was he, as I take it, that Sertorius beat in Spain with those brave arms, which also served Eumenes against Antigonus, and Surenas against Crassus:—

“These commotions of their minds, and this so mighty fray, quashed by the throw of a little dust, will cease.”

Let us but slip our flies after them, and even these will have the force and the courage to disperse them. Within recent memory, the Portuguese besieging the city of Tamly, in the territory of Xiatine, the inhabitants of the place brought a number of hives, of which are great plenty in that place, upon the wall, and with fire drove the bees so furiously upon the enemy that they gave over the enterprise and trussed up their baggage, not being able to stand their attacks and stings; and so the city, by this new sort of relief, was freed from the danger with so wonderful a fortune, that at their return from the fight there was not found a single bee to tell the story. The souls of emperors and cobblers are cast in the same mould; the weight and importance of the actions of princes considered, we persuade ourselves that they must be produced by some as weighty and important causes: but we are deceived; for they are pushed on and pulled back in their movements by the same springs that we are in our little matters: the same reason that makes us wrangle with a neighbor, causes a war betwixt princes; the same reason that makes us whip a lacquey, befalling a king makes him ruin a whole province. They are as prompt and as easily moved as we, but they are able to do more mischief; in a gnat and an elephant the passion is the same.

As to what concerns fidelity, there is no animal in the world so treacherous as man. Our histories have recorded the eager pursuit that dogs have made after the murderers of their masters. King Pyrrhus, observing a dog that watched a dead man’s body, and understanding that he had for three days together performed that office, commanded that the body should be buried, and took the dog along with him. One day, as he was at a general muster of his army, this dog saw his master’s murderers, and with great barking and extreme signs of anger flew upon them, by this first accusation awaking the revenge of this murder, which was soon after perfected by form of justice. As much was done by the dog of the sage Hesiod, which convicted the sons of Ganyctor of Naupactus of the murder committed on the person of his master. Another dog, put to guard a temple at Athens, having spied a sacrilegious thief who carried away the finest jewels, fell to barking at him with all the force he had; but, the warders not awaking at the noise, he followed him, and, day being broken, kept off at a short distance, without losing sight of him; if he offered him anything to eat, he would not take it, but would wag his tail at all the passengers he met, and took

whatever they gave him at their hands; and if the thief laid down to sleep, he likewise stayed upon the spot. The news of this dog having come to the warders of the temple, they put themselves upon the pursuit, inquiring as to the color of the dog, and at last found him in the city of Cromyon, and the thief also, whom they brought back to Athens, where he had his reward: and the judges taking cognizance of this good office, ordered a certain measure of corn for the dog's daily sustenance, at the public charge, and the priests to take care to it. Plutarch delivers this story for a most certain truth, and as one that happened in the age wherein he lived.

As to gratitude (for it seems to me we had need bring this word into a little greater repute), this one example, which Apion reports himself to have been an eyewitness of, shall suffice. "One day," says he, "that at Rome they entertained the people with the fighting of several strange beasts, and principally of lions of an unusual size, there was one amongst the rest who, by his furious deportment, by the strength and largeness of his limbs, and by his loud and dreadful roaring, attracted the eyes of all the spectators. Amongst the other slaves, that were presented to the people in this combat of beasts, there was one Androclus of Dacia, belonging to a Roman lord of consular dignity. This lion, having seen him at a distance, first made a sudden stop, as it were, in a wondering posture, and then softly approached nearer in a gentle and peaceable manner, as if it were to enter into acquaintance with him; this being done, and being now assured of what he sought, he began to wag his tail, as dogs do when they flatter their masters, and to kiss and lick the hands and thighs of the poor wretch, who was beside himself and almost dead with fear. Androclus having, by this kindness of the lion, a little come to himself, and having taken so much heart as to consider and recognize him, it was a singular pleasure to see the joy and caresses that passed betwixt them. At which the people breaking into loud acclamations of joy, the emperor caused the slave to be called, to know from him the cause of so strange an event. He thereupon told him a new and a very wonderful story: My master, said he, being proconsul in Africa, I was constrained by his severity and cruel usage, being daily beaten, to steal from him and to run away. And to hide myself securely from a person of so great authority in the province, I thought it my best way to fly to the solitudes, sands, and uninhabitable parts of that country, resolved, in case the means of supporting life should fail me, to make some shift or other to kill myself. The sun being excessively hot at noon, and the heat

intolerable, I found a retired and almost inaccessible cave, and went into it. Soon after there came in to me this lion with one foot wounded and bloody, complaining and groaning with the pain he endured: at his coming I was exceedingly afraid, but he having espied me hid in a corner of his den, came gently to me, holding out and showing me his wounded foot, as if he demanded my assistance in his distress. I then drew out a great splinter he had got there, and growing a little more familiar with him, squeezing the wound, thrust out the dirt and gravel that had got into it, wiped and cleansed it as well as I could. He, finding himself something better and much eased of his pain, lay down to repose, and presently fell asleep with his foot in my hand. From that time forward, he and I lived together in this cave three whole years, upon the same diet; for of the beasts that he killed in hunting he always brought me the best pieces, which I roasted in the sun for want of fire, and so ate them. At last growing weary of this wild and brutish life, the lion being one day gone abroad to hunt for our ordinary provision, I escaped from thence, and the third day after was taken by the soldiers, who brought me from Africa to this city to my master, who presently condemned me to die, and to be exposed to the wild beasts. Now, by what I see, this lion was also taken soon after, who would now recompense me for the benefit and cure that he had received at my hands." This is the story that Androclus told the emperor, which he also conveyed from hand to hand to the people; wherefore at the universal request, he was absolved from his sentence and set at liberty; and the lion was, by order of the people, presented to him. We afterwards saw, says Apion, Androclus leading this lion, in nothing but a small leash, from tavern to tavern at Rome, and receiving what money everybody would give him, the lion being so gentle, as to suffer himself to be covered with the flowers that the people threw upon him, every one that met him: saying, There goes the lion that entertained the man; there goes the man that cured the lion.

We often lament the loss of the beasts we love, and so do they the loss of us:—

> *"Next, Aethon his warhorse came, without any of his trappings, and with heavy tears wets his cheeks."*

As some nations have wives in common, and some others have every man his own: is not the same evident amongst beasts, and marriages better kept than ours? As to the society and confederation they make amongst themselves to league themselves together, and to give one another mutual

assistance, is it not manifest that oxen, hogs, and other animals, at the cry of any of their kind that we offend, all the herd run to his aid, and embody for his defence? When the fish scarus has swallowed the angler’s hook, his fellows all crowd about him, and gnaw the line in pieces; and if by chance one be got into the net, the others present him their tails on the outside, which he holding fast with his teeth, they after that manner disengage and draw him out. Mullets, when one of their companions is engaged, cross the line over their back, and with a fin they have there, indented like a saw, saw and cut it asunder. As to the particular offices that we receive from one another for the service of life, there are several like examples amongst them. ’Tis said that the whale never moves that he has not always before him a little fish, like the seagudgeon, for this reason called the guide-fish, whom the whale follows, suffering himself to be led and turned with as great facility as the helm guides the ship: in recompense of which service, whereas all other things, whether beast or vessel, that enter into the dreadful gulf of this monster’s mouth, are immediately lost and swallowed up, this little fish retires into it in great security, and there sleeps, during which time the whale never stirs; but so soon as it goes out, he immediately follows: and if by accident he lose sight of this little guide, he goes wandering here and there, and strikes his sides against the rocks, like a ship that has lost her rudder; which Plutarch testifies to have seen off the Island of Anticyra. There is a like society betwixt the little bird called a wren and the crocodile; the wren serves for a sentinel over this great animal; and if the ichneumon, his mortal enemy, approach to fight him, this little bird, for fear lest he should surprise him asleep, both with his voice and bill rouses him and gives him notice of his danger: he feeds on this monster’s leavings, who receives him familiarly into his mouth, suffering him to peck in his jaws and betwixt his teeth, and thence to take out the bits of flesh that remain; and when he has a mind to shut his mouth, he first gives the bird warning to go out, by closing it by little and little, without bruising or doing it any harm at all. The shell-fish called nacre lives also in the same intelligence with the shrimp, a little animal of the lobster kind, serving him in the nature of usner and porter, sitting at the opening of the shell which the nacre keeps always gaping and open, till the shrimp sees some little fish proper for their prey within the hollow of the shell, and then it enters too, and pinches the nacre to the quick, so that she is forced to close her shell, where they two together devour the prey they have trapped into their fort. In the manner of

living of the tunnies we observe a singular knowledge of the three parts of mathematics: as to astrology, they teach it to men, for they stay in the place where they are surprised by the Brumal Solstice, and never stir thence till the next Equinox; for which reason Aristotle himself attributes to them this science; as to geometry and arithmetic, they always form their array in the figure of a cube, every way square, and make up the body of a battalion, solid, close, and environed with six equal sides; so that swimming in this square order, as large behind as before, whoever in seeing them can count one rank, may easily number the whole troop, by reason that the depth is equal to the breadth, and the breadth to the length.

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